

WHERE THREE EMPIRES MEET

A NARRATIVE OF RECENT TRAVEL IN
KASHMIR, WESTERN TIBET, GILGIT
AND THE ADJOINING COUNTRIES

BY

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"THE CRUISE OF THE FALCON," "THE CRUISE OF THE ALERTE,"
"THE FALCON ON THE BALTIC," "SAVE ME FROM MY FRIENDS," ETC.

WITH A MAP AND 39 ILLUSTRATIONS

ABRIDGED WITH NOTES

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P R E F A C E

VARIOUS circumstances took me to Kashmir in the spring of 1891. I did not see much of the Happy Valley itself ; but for the greater part of a year I was travelling among those desolate mountain-tracts that lie to the north of it, where the ranges of the Hindoo Koosh and Karakoram form the boundary between the dominions of the Maharajah and that somewhat vaguely defined region which we call Central Asia.

Great changes are now being effected in Kashmir ; we are actively interfering in the administration of the country, and introducing much-needed reforms, which will produce important results in the immediate future. The affairs of this State are likely soon to attract a good deal of attention, and therefore a description of the country as it is to-day, and some account of the relations which exist between the Indian Empire and her tributary, and of the steps that are being taken to safeguard Imperial interests on that portion of our frontier, may not be inopportune.

I have, so far as is possible, confined myself to a narrative of my own experiences, to a plain statement of what I myself saw, without attempting to theorise as to what ought to be done or left undone on the frontier. The Indian Government can be trusted to do everything for

the best, as heretofore ; and while it is foolish for people at home to airily criticise the policy of those highly-trained experts who have made the complicated problems of our Asiatic rule the study of a lifetime, it is still more foolish for one to do so who has spent but a year in the East, and who, therefore, has just had time to realise what a vast amount he has yet to learn.

In the course of my journey I was luckily enabled to accompany my friend, Mr Walter Lawrence, the Settlement Officer who has been appointed to the Kashmir State, on one of his official tours, and saw something of his interesting and successful work ; I visited the mystic land of Ladak with Captain Bower, the explorer of Tibet ; reached Gilgit in time to take part in Colonel Durand's expedition against the raiding Hunza-Nagars ; and fell in with other exceptional opportunities for observing how things are managed on the frontier, both in peace and war.

My thanks are due to the editors of *The Times*, *The Graphic*, and *Black and White* for the permission they have kindly given me to reproduce in this book portions of articles which I wrote for those papers.

The illustration of the Devil Dance at Himis is a reproduction of a drawing (by Mr J. Finnemore, from my photographs) which appeared in *Black and White*.

The whole region included in the sketch-map which accompanies this volume is an intricate mass of mighty mountains cloven by innumerable ravines. In order to avoid confusion superfluous detail has been avoided ; the principal valleys alone have been indicated, while the two great parallel watersheds of the Hindoo Koosh and the Western Himalayas have been purposely emphasised, at

the expense of the no less lofty subordinate branches of either chain.

Kashmir has been called the northern bastion of India. Gilgit can be described as her farther outpost. And hard by Gilgit it is that, in an undefined way, on the high Roof of the World—what more fitting a place!—the three greatest Empires of the Earth meet—Great Britain, Russia, and China. Hence the title I have given to this book.

E. F. K.

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WHERE THREE EMPIRES MEET

CHAPTER I

SNOW—THE ROAD INTO KASHMIR—THE JHELAM—DOMEL

ON February 26, 1891, leaving the then very dense fogs of London, I embarked on the good ship *Rome*, of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, bound for Bombay. The winter had been a notoriously severe one, and a great portion of the northern half of our globe was still under snow. Whenever we sighted high land between England and Port Said we had proofs of this. On doubling Gibraltar we saw the Sierra Nevada, on the Spanish coast, gleaming white from the jagged summits almost down to the base, while on the African shore Mount Atlas supported the misty heaven on cold, pale shoulders. Farther on, as we steamed towards the Straits of Messina, we saw the dome of Etna, pale pink and unsubstantial looking, floating in mid-air.

My companion, Mr Charles Spedding, and I arrived at Bombay on March 23. From here to our immediate destination, Rawal Pindi, is little more than a three days' journey by express train; but we traversed India in leisurely fashion, remaining a day or two at Bombay to see the Caves of Elephanta and the Towers of Silence; halting another day at Agra to visit that surely fairest building ever raised by man, the magical Taj; and two or three days more at Lahore, so that it was not until the morning of April 5 that we alighted from our train at Rawal Pindi station, and saw before us to the north the snow-covered ranges of the outer Himalayas.

We had come to the barrier of those seemingly interminable dusty plains of India which we had been traversing for days, and already found ourselves in a different climate.

The fresh hill-breeze was deliciously cool and invigorating, and the clear blue sky was of a different tint and pleasanter to look at than the heaven of the sultry South.

We drove from the station to the house of Mr Dhanjibhoy, a courteous Parsee gentleman who contracts to carry mails, passengers, and baggage between Rawal Pindi and Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. He informed us that there were still eight feet of snow on parts of the road, and that landslips and avalanches had destroyed it in places and carried away bridges, but that it was now more or less passable, and that he was running the mail to Srinagar, a distance of 225 miles, in forty-eight hours. Passengers with baggage, however, could not travel nearly so fast as this.

By the time we had breakfasted Mr Dhanjibhoy had all ready for us, and our caravan started. Four or five of those clumsy, slow, and altogether unscientifically constructed little vehicles known as *ekkas*, and which, I suppose, have been in use in India ever since wheels were invented, carried our servants and our baggage, while we ourselves got into a *tonga*, a handy little two-horse trap. A Punjabi coachman drove us at a good twelve miles an hour towards the hills, while a lad hung on behind, blowing a horn to give warning of our wild approach whenever we were about to turn a corner. We changed horses every five miles or so, and in less than an hour and a half we reached the outposts of the mountains. The road now wound along the sides of pleasant valleys with wooded slopes and cultivated bottoms vivid with the green of young rice. We gradually ascended, the air getting perceptibly cooler, till we reached the dak bungalow or post-house of Tret, which is twenty-five miles from Rawal Pindi. The *ekkas* came in long after us ; our daily progress had, of course, to be regulated by that of the *ekkas*.

The next day, having allowed the tardy *ekkas* to get a good start, we were off again. We only accomplished fourteen miles this day, to Murree ; but the road zig-zagged up the hills by a steady incline all the way, and was trying for horses.

At first the country we passed through reminded one of the fair valleys on the Italian slope of the Alps in spring. We drove through woods of fragrant deodars and firs ; the

fruit-trees, the violets and other flowers were all in blossom, while clear cool water ran merrily down every hollow. But when we got higher, the air was cold and the scenery had a wintry aspect. The road was in very bad condition, and in places was being repaired by large gangs of coolies.

Ekkas were not to be procured beyond Murree, and all our heavy baggage had to be carried on the backs of coolies for the rest of the way. But it was arranged that tongas should be sent from Srinagar to meet us at the point where the road again became practicable for horses, to carry ourselves and our light baggage. So as to give the coolies a good start, Spedding halted us for three days at this cheerless but bracing spot.

On April 9 we were off again. We had to walk a few miles to the point where the road was open; here we found tongas awaiting us, and we rattled away down the hills. The journey for the next few days was one calculated to try the nerves a bit. The road was in very bad condition: landslips had been frequent; rickety temporary bridges took the place of those that had been swept away; where the road had fallen bodily into the abyss, a track only just sufficiently broad to allow the tonga to pass had been cleared. Once one of our horses and a wheel of the tonga did slip over the side, on which we promptly jumped out. Luckily, there were some road-menders by who rescued carriage and animals, pulling them back before they rolled over the precipice. Our reckless coachman, too, had an unpleasant fashion of driving at full gallop along these dangerous places and round the sharp turns where no parapet existed at the edge of the cliff.

The relays were frequent, and, without exception, when the fresh horses were put in at a stage they jibbed and plunged madly for a few minutes, the sore backs which had been inflicted on the poor animals by negligence being obviously the cause. It is lucky that the post-houses where the changes are made are always at an easy part of the road with no precipice very near, else serious accidents would be the rule and not the exception on this road.

We passed gangs of coolies working on the wrecked road at frequent intervals. They were of various hill-races, Kashmiris, Baltis, and Pathans, good-natured fellows,

ready to laugh and interchange a joke, and also to help us by pushing on the tonga over a bad bit, or clearing fallen boulders from our path.

After driving some way we entered the valley of the river Jhelam, the classical Hydaspes, which formed the Eastern limit of the conquests of Alexander the Great. It is said that he embarked on it to descend to the Indus. He must have had a rough and anxious voyage if it was then the foaming, rushing, rock-encumbered torrent it is now. This portion of the river is not navigable for a craft of any description, but quantities of small logs—to be used as railway-sleepers in India—are cut in the forests of Kashmir and thrown into it. These are washed down to the Punjab, where the agents of the Maharajah collect as many as are not dashed into matchwood.

The road from Kohala onwards, which completes the connection between Rawal Pindi and Srinagar, was constructed by the Kashmir State. This is the only road practicable for wheels in the whole of this country. It was commenced in the reign of the late Maharajah. The progress of the work, however, was very slow for a time, only thirty miles of it having been finished, after several years' labour, when Mr Spedding contracted to complete the remaining portion without delay. He brought his work to a satisfactory conclusion in 1890, having overcome all the extraordinary natural difficulties which this mountainous district opposes to the engineer. It is spoken of by competent judges as being one of the finest mountain roads in the world. It is needless to speak in this place of its strategical importance, and I shall have plenty to say later on concerning its prolongation, on which Mr Spedding is still working—a military road connecting Srinagar with Gilgit, the extreme northern outpost of Kashmir, and, therefore, of the regions under British influence.

The scenery through which we now drove was very pleasing. The steep slopes of the mountains were well cultivated to a considerable height. The laboriously built-up terraces of soil were irrigated by little artificial canals carrying the water from tributary nullahs for miles along the hillsides; the groves of peach, walnut, apricot, almond, and other fruit-trees, mostly now in full blossom,

the vines trained up the poplars as in Italy, and the scattered patches of various grain, showing the existence of a considerable and industrious peasantry. The whole of the Kashmir State is practically independent of rain. A fairly hard winter, storing a sufficiency of snow on the mountain tops, so that the gradual thaw through the summer keeps the irrigation canals constantly brimming, is all that is wanted to ensure an abundant harvest. Every great famine that has occurred in Kashmir has been caused, not by summer drought, but by a too mild winter, or by heavy rains in the hot season, which have flooded the plains and destroyed the crops.

Above this terraced cultivation were the pine-forests and the pastures on which numbers of sheep and goats were feeding; while, far above, seen through gaps of the lower ranges, rose the great snowy peaks.

The road now followed the precipitous left bank of the Jhelam, passing sometimes over galleries that had been carried along the face of perpendicular cliffs, sometimes under tunnels that had been driven through rocky buttresses. Here, the avalanches and landslips that had followed the enormous snowfall of the winter had damaged the road in many places, destroying parapets and bridges.

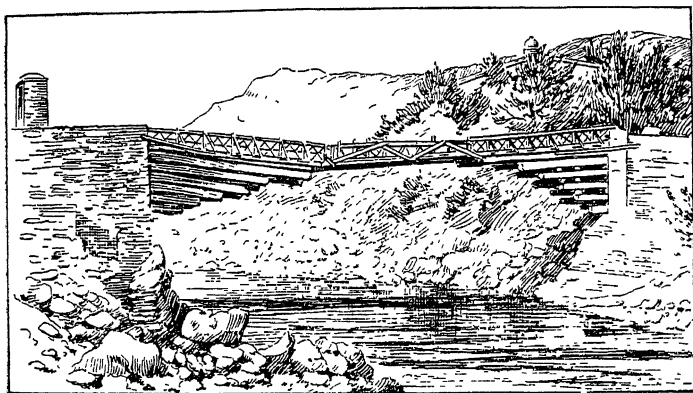
This night's halting-place was the dak bungalow of Dulai, forty miles from Murree. This is a comfortable post-house, as are all those on the Kashmir section of the road. On the following day we travelled to Domel, and put up in what is the prettiest dak bungalow in Kashmir, situated at a beautifully verdant spot at a bend of the foaming river and commanding a delightful view both up and down the valley.

A walk through the little bazaar after breakfast brought me to the fine iron bridge which here spans the river. Close by, the Kishengunga River joins the Jhelam, and is spanned by a light suspension bridge which surmounts an old wooden cantilever bridge, now broken-backed and falling in. Wherever anything more permanent and solid than a rope bridge is required in Kashmir it has been customary, from time immemorial, to build it on the cantilever principle, generally of one arch, the supporting timbers projecting one over another from the bank, their shore ends

being weighted down with masonry. These Kashmir bridges are strongly constructed, and some still in use are of great antiquity.

At Domel, Spedding had business to transact, so we halted for a few days, and a pleasanter spot could not have been chosen for the purpose.

On crossing the bridge on the morning after our arrival, I found a picturesque encampment which served to remind me that I was now well on my way to Central Asia. This was a large caravan from Yarkund that was bringing a considerable freight of carpets and tea across the mountains



KASHMIR CANTILEVER BRIDGE.

to India. The men, warmly clad in clumsy robes and sheepskins, were natives of Chinese Turkestan, big, jovial-looking, rosy-cheeked fellows of Tatar type.

There is a considerable Sikh colony in the neighbourhood of Domel, and as one of the most important Sikh religious festivals commences on April 12, all the people of that faith—men, women, and children—were gathered here from far and wide, clad in their festal raiment. They bathed in the sacred Jhelam, feasted or fasted according to the law, and made merry. It was interesting to see these cheery, simple, fine people enjoying their holiday.

It was while we were here that the news of the Manipur disaster reached us. I noticed that there appeared to be

an impression abroad that there were troubles ahead on the frontier; vague rumours were in the air of coming disturbances in the North-West. The Black Mountain fanatics were again preparing for war just beyond the mountains to the west of us, and within sight of the Murree hills. We heard that the Chins had risen, that a general outbreak of the Miranzais had taken place, and that our troops would be attacked by a force of nearly 10,000 Afridis, Akhils, and Mishtis. Spedding remarked, "I should not be surprised if we see some fighting before we leave this country."

Another guest arrived at the bungalow during our stay. This was Captain Bower, of the 17th Bengal Cavalry, well known as a traveller and explorer in Central Asia, who has since made his name still more famous by his extraordinary journey across Tibet from Ladak to Shanghai. He was now on his way to Srinagar to organise his caravan, and intended to set out for Ladak as soon as the passes between Kashmir and the Tibetan frontier were open. I had some interesting conversations with him concerning those desolate regions, and he pointed out to me on the map a long blank space stretching across the north of India. "I hope to do away with a good deal of that blank," he said, "when I return." He suggested that, later on, I should accompany him as far as the Chinese frontier, and see the curious Buddhist country of Ladak. I was very glad to avail myself of the opportunity of visiting that region in the company of one who knew it so well, and agreed to join him.

CHAPTER II

BARAMOULA—KASHMIRI BOATMEN—ACROSS THE WOOLAR LAKE—
THE VALE OF KASHMIR—A STORM ON THE LAKE

ON April 24, Spedding and I started for Baramoula, where we were to leave the cart road and take to boats. This, our last day's journey on the road, carried us through the fairest country we had yet seen. We drove through pleasant groves of chestnuts, walnuts, peaches, pears, cherries, mulberries, and apples, all of which are indigenous to

this favoured land, while the wild vines hung in festoons from the branches. The fresh grass beneath the trees was spangled with various flowers—great terra-cotta coloured lilies, iris of several shades, and others—while hawthorn bushes in full blossom emulated the whiteness of the snows above. The mountains, too, were craggy and grand in outline. Sparkling cascades dashed over many a high precipice. It was a land of running water, of fruit, and flowers, and birds, and sweet odours, that made one think that the beauties of far-famed Kashmir had not been exaggerated by the Oriental poets.

But though in the territory of the Maharajah, we were not really yet in Kashmir proper; for though new conquests have extended the State, Kashmir itself is still restricted to the Vale, or rather great alluvial plain, of Kashmir, together with the valleys running into it. It was not till we reached the town of Baramoula that we emerged from the defile that forms the gateway of Kashmir, and saw before us the commencement of that fair oasis which is so curiously embedded in the midst of the rugged Himalayan system. By Baramoula the hills recede on either side of the Jhelam Valley, cultivated plains border the river, and the raving Jhelam itself broadens into a slowly-flowing stream. Just beyond Baramoula the last spurs of the hills slope gently into the vast plain which stretches to the far-away, dim, snowy ranges. After having been shut in for days within the narrow horizons of the Jhelam gorges, with the loud tumult of foaming torrents ever in one's ears, it seemed pleasant and strangely soothing to come suddenly upon this extensive landscape, and walk by the banks of this calm, broad water, which did not raise a murmur to break the stillness of the evening.

The distance from Baramoula to Srinagar by land is thirty-two miles; but the usual method of proceeding to the capital is by boat, up the sinuous Jhelam and across the Woollar Lake, a twenty hours' journey. By the banks of the river we found our servants awaiting us amidst the piles of baggage. A number of *doongahs*, as the Kashmiri travelling boats are called, were drawn up along the shore hard by, and the rival crews clamoured round in their usual persistent way for our custom. We engaged as

many boats as were necessary for our party and embarked.

A doongah is a sort of large punt, fifty feet long or more, partly roofed over with matting, supported by a wooden framework. The two ends of the boat are left open, and here the men, women, and children forming the crew steer, work their short paddles, or quant. Most of the roofed-in portion is placed at the service of the traveller who engages



DOONGAHS.

the doongah, and here he puts up his bed and impedimenta ; but a small space in the stern is cut off by a mat and reserved for the crew, generally consisting of one man, his wives and children, who live and do their cooking there.

The Hanjis, or boatmen, form a separate class in Kashmir. They are fine-looking men, athletic, hard-working, and extremely courteous. Their women when young are often beautiful, and the children, of whom they appear to be very fond, are the prettiest little creatures imaginable.

Our servants occupied one doongah, in which they could prepare our meals, while we Englishmen had a

doongah each to live in. There is not much privacy in one of these craft, and while travelling at night light sleepers must not expect repose, for the men sing wild choruses and the women chatter unceasingly.

We were towed and paddled through the greater part of the night, but when I awoke at dawn I found all quiet—even the babies were still, and our crews were sleeping. Our little fleet was brought up alongside the bank where the Woolar Lake flows into the Jhelam, close to the village of Sopor. I now saw around me the Vale of Kashmir in its entirety; a vast green plain with lakes and many winding streams, surrounded by a distant circle of great mountains, shutting it in on all sides with a seemingly impassable barrier of rock and snow, rising in peaks of immense height, some of the highest in the world indeed, gleaming dimly in the morning light. It is not strange that the invaders who came upon this sweet oasis after months of travelling among the fearful and arid mountain regions that lie beyond waxed enthusiastic over its fertile beauty and hailed it as the first paradise.

The Vale of Kashmir is about 5200 feet above the sea; it is oval in shape, being, roughly, one hundred miles long and twenty miles broad; while the Woolar Lake is ten miles in length and six in breadth, but its waters, flooding the extensive swamps and low pastures, often extend over a far greater area. At some remote period the whole plain was submerged, forming a great inland sea, of which tradition speaks. Then the waters broke through the mountain dam at Baramoula, deepening and broadening the channel of the Jhelam, the only outlet, with the result that the Woolar has shrunk to its present dimensions; while the greater portion of the old lake bed is now a rich alluvial plain, cloven by numerous streams and some rivers of considerable size, which, rushing down the mountain gorges from the glaciers and perpetual snows, pour themselves into the lake, and so ultimately into the Jhelam. Before the breaking away of the barrier at Baramoula, the level of the lake was some 600 feet higher than it is now. The liberated waters washed away vast quantities of the softer soil, so that the plain of Kashmir is much lower than the bed of the old lake. But there still remain isolated

portions of this ancient bed that were left by the subsiding waters ; these are the Karewahs, as they are called, flat-topped hills, with steep cliff sides rising some hundreds of feet above the plain, which form a striking feature in the scenery of the Vale.

Tatars, Tibetans, Moguls, Afghans, and Sikhs have all in turn overrun the Happy Valley, whose inhabitants have been obliged to submit to each new tyranny. They have, in consequence, acquired a habit of submissive meekness which almost amounts to cowardice. Their very abjectness has been their salvation ; for their conquerors not having to fear them, did not attempt to exterminate them or to dispossess them of their lands, but left them to cultivate the rich soil and carry on their industries, their enslavers appropriating the results of their labour. They still cultivate the best lands, and are likely to prosper under the beneficent regime which the Indian Government is introducing. It is to be hoped that greater liberty will tend to make men of them ; but it will take long to raise them from the degradation into which they have been sunk by ages of oppression.

It was late in the afternoon before our fleet got under way again. The crews paddled along lustily and we were soon well away from the land on the broad inland sea. The air was still and sultry, and there came a stormy sunset with magnificent colouring. The uninterrupted wall of mountains which surrounded us, many of whose peaks out-topped Mont Blanc by thousands of feet, presented a very fine appearance in the distance, the vast snowy wastes being lit here with a pale yellow light, here glowing like molten gold, and here gleaming purest white ; while the deep, shadowed defiles that clove the hills were purple black. But on the lake itself night was already falling, and by the dim light all that we could distinguish round us was the dark water and the high summits of those Himalayan deserts of rock, ice, and snow, on which the sun's rays still rested. There was something unearthly in the colouring and in the desolation of the scene as well as in the immensity of the distances. It might have been some landscape of the ruined moon, so lifeless and strange it seemed.

The storm signs were not deceptive. One of the violent squalls that are frequent here swept down on the lake, loud thunder pealed among the mountains, while a rough sea at once got up on the broad waters. The matting was blown off the roofs of the doongahs quicker than it could be taken in by the crews. The water tumbled on board each craft, and forthwith a tremendous commotion arose among the boatmen. Such a noise I never heard before—men, women, and children were lamenting, weeping, and howling in one terrified chorus. It was vain to attempt to paddle the heavy boats against so strong a wind, so the whole fleet had to scud back before the storm towards the mainland on our lee, where stood a small village. In their terror the men tumbled over each other in hopeless confusion, each one giving orders and cursing his fellows instead of lending a hand. We had almost reached the shore when, with a heavy downpour of rain, the wind suddenly shifted and threatened to drive us out into the broadest part of the lake; whereupon the panic became worse than ever. Luckily the wind soon shifted again to a quarter that was fair for us, and the scared mariners struggled hard with their paddles to attain the safety of the dry land as quickly as possible.

During the storm the surrounding mountains appeared more fantastic than ever; rainbows spanned the peaks; and for some time after the sun was set one far-off, snowy plateau shone out with an uncanny yellow light when all else was dark.

All the boats were at last successfully beached, and our boatmen proceeded to break their long fast and gorge themselves with food.

CHAPTER III

CLIMATE—SRINAGAR—THE EUROPEAN QUARTER—THE TAKHT-I-SULEIMAN

ON waking on the morning of April 26 we found that we had left the lake and were ascending the Jhelam once more—not, as it is lower down, a torrent raging down deep

gorges, but a placid stream, as broad as the Thames at Kew, winding sluggishly across the flat alluvial plains. Our men had now put aside the paddles, and were tramping along the bank with the towlines. The sky was clear, the air cool and pure, after the storm ; it was veritable Kashmir spring weather.

The heavy boats were towed but slowly, so we often disembarked and walked along the banks which have here been artificially raised to prevent the water overflowing the adjacent land, much of the plain at this season being considerably below the level of the river.

All round us was the great circle of snowy ranges that encompass the plain. We traversed fine pastures at this season blue with a species of iris very common in Kashmir. We passed villages pleasantly embowered amongst walnut, mulberry, and other trees, while frequently the great chenars or plane-trees, which form one of the features of the Happy Valley, stood like giants above the others. It was a land of birds, too. Numbers of larks were singing to the rising sun, there was a cooing of doves and a calling of cuckoos, while brightly-coloured and quaint little hoopoes were darting among the foliage, elevating their impertinent crests as they stared at us with an expression that plainly said, "What right have you people in our country?"

At last we saw ahead of us the two landmarks of Srinagar, which are visible far across the plain—the prison and fortress of Hari Parbat topping a dome-shaped hill, and the higher peak of Takht-i-Suleiman, which rises precipitously 1000 feet above the city, and on whose rocky summit stands a temple upwards of two thousand years old.

After several hours of slow progress up the winding reaches of the river, we traversed the scattered suburbs and entered the Asiatic Venice. Srinagar, "The City of the Sun," contains a population of something under 100,000. When approached by one of its numerous waterways it appears a pleasing place at first sight and worthy to be the capital of a great State, but the traveller is somewhat disillusioned when he leaves the waterside to penetrate the narrow streets.

Leaving our slow doongahs to follow us, we hailed some

of the gondolas of Srinagar—long, swift canoes known as *shikarahs*—in which we reclined luxuriously on soft cushions and surveyed the busy scene. Many picturesque craft of all sorts were travelling on the river: clumsy cargo barges laden with timber, grain, or oil; mat-roofed doongahs full of passengers and their baggage; darting shikarahs, in which sat smiling merchants in fine silk robes, carrying samples of their wares; while now and then a gorgeous galley hung with rich awnings would be paddled swiftly past us by a crew of twenty boatmen or so in gay uniform.

The steps of the ghats, which afforded access to the river from the streets, were crowded with people—women who had come down with their pitchers for water, Hindoos performing their ablutions, and children.

The houses on the banks were of many storeys, most of them richly ornamented with carved wood, and with something of mediæval Europe in their appearance, while the sloping roofs of nearly all were overgrown with verdure. The dome of one temple was very characteristic: it was covered with long grass thickly studded with scarlet poppies and yellow mustard. Mulberry-trees, with vines winding about them, grew between the houses, producing a pretty effect. The temples of the Hindoos and the mosques of the Mussulmans, some very handsome, stood among the other buildings.

Our boatmen paddled us on, past the mansions of the merchants and the palace of the Maharajah, under numerous bridges built on stacks of logs on the cantilever principle; and my first impressions of the capital on this fine afternoon were distinctly favourable, for there is a quaint beauty in these city waterways, and the charm is enhanced by the ranges of snowy mountains and the flashing glaciers which as a rule form a background to the view.

There is a certain district set aside for the use of Europeans, and to this we now repaired. This is outside the city, on the banks of the river, and extends for some distance, forming a pleasant little colony. Here are the Residency, the British church, the English library, the hospital, the polo and cricket grounds, the golf links, the racecourse, and the rowing club.

The Jhelam, where it flows through the European

quarter, presents quite a lively appearance. Gay house-boats and capacious family doongahs line the shore, and when the heat of the day has passed, the water is covered with rowing-boats.

Along one of the prettiest reaches of the river stretches the Chenar Bagh, or Garden of Plane Trees, so called from the magnificent chenars which shade the grassy lawns that descend to the water. It is indeed a lovely spot, and as



THE CHENAR BAGH.

one looks up the reach, the rocky pinnacle of the Takht-i-Suleiman, with its crowning temple, forms a noble background to the scene.

We moored our boats along the bank and dined that night with Mr Lawrence, the Settlement Officer, who kindly asked me to join him on one of his official tours in the Valley, an invitation of which I was very glad to avail myself.

Of the various sights of Srinagar itself, its mosques, its ruined temples, I shall say nothing ; for these have

been often written about, and there are at least two guide-books fully describing the city. But I must speak of the view which I enjoyed one morning from the Takht-i-Suleiman, or Throne of Solomon, the isolated peak which, rising precipitously from the edge of the river opposite the European quarter, towers above the plain. It is a view that no traveller should miss. I looked down on the many windings of the river and the numerous canals traversing this eastern Venice, with its temples, its glittering mosques, and its garden-roofed houses, all lying extended beneath me like a plan. Beyond spread the irrigated plain with its flooded rice-fields. In the distance was the great gleaming sheet of the Woolar, and still nearer, at the foot of the hill on which I stood, the smaller, but equally beautiful Dal Lake. The Maharajah's vineyards are on the sloping shores of the Dal; so, too, are the exquisite *baghs* or pleasure-gardens of the kings of old—beautiful lawns descending to the pellucid water, planted with magnificent trees, and having shady groves, among which are winding walks and retired pavilions. Here was the Versailles of the Mogul Emperors, where, in the summer evenings, the luxurious feasts were given, when the branches of the chenars were hung with thousands of coloured lamps, while nautches and musicians entertained the gathered guests. Beyond the lakes, afar off, the grand and mysterious wall of mountains encompassed the plain, their purple crags and snows merged in cloud. A wonderful effect, as if the encircling Himalayas were the limit of this lower world, and were gigantic steps into the heavens beyond.

CHAPTER IV

INDIAN SERVANTS—"DASTUR"—PREPARATIONS FOR JOURNEY—BY RIVER TO ISLAMABAD—THE "SETTLEMENT OFFICER"—COLLECTION OF THE REVENUE—FORCED LABOUR

AFTER a short and very pleasant stay in Srinagar, in the course of which I made the acquaintance of the different British officials who had been selected to assist the Government in the administration of the State, I set out on my

travels, not at all sorry to have some hundreds of miles of rough marching, after the luxurious laziness of steamers, trains, tongas, and doongahs.

I had already provided myself with an old Mahomedan servant at Bombay, one Babu Khan, of whom I have not yet spoken, a knowing old rascal, who spoke a little English. How respectful he was! How attentive! What unbounded devotion he professed for the “noble Sir,” who was to him “both as father and mother!” How skilled in subtle and unanswerable excuse for every fault! How sleeplessly watchful for an opportunity of cheating me out of a few annas—but never allowing anyone else to do so! Yet, on the other hand, as so many of these men are, what an excellent servant on the road he really was! A cook who could produce a dinner for a gourmet out of the simplest materials at the end of a hard day’s march; willing, and clever at making a *bandobast*. What a useful and expressive word, by the way, that word *bandobast* is! The dictionary gives “management, arrangement,” as the English equivalents for it, but what a lot more it really signifies!

On being asked whether he would go to Leh with me—a chilly and disagreeable journey—Babu Khan replied, with a profound bow: “I will go wheresoever my sahib goes; to the wars, if he wishes it,” and forthwith took the keenest interest in the preparations for the journey; for every purchase I made, whether effected through his instrumentality or not, brought to him the usual present from the vendor, according to *dastur*—another comprehensive word, the dictionary translation of which is “commission,” or “custom.”

It not only covers customary commission, but customary anything else. It is a word that one soon comes to hate. Vain is it to try to have things done after your own ideas. You point out how some piece of work can be accomplished in a more expeditious or satisfactory way, and the Oriental to whom you address your remarks listens patiently, quite agrees with all you have said, and then politely but doggedly replies, “Sir, that is not the *dastur*”; that ends the argument.

Thus my servant, after explaining to me what it was the *dastur* to carry on the road, passed several days in the

bazaar making the necessary purchases. It was the dastur, I discovered, to travel with what, after my experience of other countries, appeared to be an extraordinary quantity of pots and pans. But I should never have got a dinner out of the old ruffian with less ; it would have been against dastur !

It was also dastur, as I afterwards found out, to poison me regularly once a month. I had to put up with it. For all the pots and pans had then to be taken to a bazaar, if one was near, to be re-tinned. Now the tin employed for this purpose in Kashmir, and often in India, is an amalgam containing little tin and a good deal of lead, as may be demonstrated by rubbing a freshly tinned article with a handkerchief, which is at once blackened. I had a solid tin canteen among my cooking things, and Babu Khan on one occasion stretched dastur to the absurdity of having even this covered with the above impure compound. This monthly poisoning of his "father and mother" brought Babu Khan a profit of about twopence as commission from the tinker on each occasion.

For an English reader purposing a journey into these regions, the following particulars may be of use. Ten coolie-loads of baggage and stores should suffice for a single traveller. The regulation coolie-load is fifty pounds, so one's impedimenta must be distributed accordingly. As mules, ponies, and yaks are employed for carriage where possible instead of coolies, the baggage should be so stowed as to adapt itself to all these modes of transport. Small *yakdans*, or mule-trunks, are excellent for containing one's clothes and valuables ; these leather-covered trunks are sold in pairs, and whereas one trunk makes an average coolie-load, the two, connected by a couple of strong straps, can be swung on to the back of any sort of baggage animal. When in camp, the two yakdans form one's bed, two poles, with a canvas bed laced between them, being extended from one yakdan to the other, iron sockets being attached to the yakdans to receive the pole ends. *Kiltas*, or leather-covered baskets, which, as Duke says in his guide, are shaped like Ali Baba's jars, are useful to hold one's cooking things and stores, of which last a considerable quantity will be required for a long journey. For though one can



SRINAGAR.

generally obtain sheep, fowls, and eggs in all parts of the State, it is only in the bazaars of a few towns and villages, which can be counted on the fingers of one hand, that stores of any description can be procured. Hence a supply of tea, candles, sugar, flour, ghee, rice, and tobacco must be carried, while each traveller must please himself as to what he will take in the way of luxuries, such as tinned soups, jams, spirits, and the like.

A folding chair and table, a portable leathern bath, a rifle, and a photographic camera also formed portion of my collection of necessities, which, when gathered together, appeared an appalling mass to me, accustomed as I was to the simplicity of travel in wild parts of North and South America and the Colonies. But if one must do in Rome as Rome does, still more must one do in the East as the East does ; one is not permitted to be simple : one must have servants, and luxuries, and dignity. In short, one must do as "dastur" enjoins.

I engaged a second servant before starting, a Kashmiri of the bheestie or water-carrying class : one, Subhana, a sturdy individual, whose duty it was to keep near me on the march with the camera, and also to assist Babu Khan generally in camp.

Before setting out with Bower to Ladak I carried out my promised tour with Mr W. R. Lawrence, the Settlement Officer to the State. He was assessing the land revenue in the neighbourhood of Islamabad, a two days' journey up the Jhelam ; so on May 4 I started in a doongah for that place with my servants and baggage.

This was a very pleasant, lazy two days' journey up the winding river, by ancient temples, crowded villages, groves, and leagues of rich pasturage supporting numerous kine. The scenery was always lovely, especially in the evening, when indescribable effects of water, foliage, sunset clouds, and far, faint moonlit snows would be produced. Indeed, a land of singular beauty, not without good reason called the Earthly Paradise, and reputed throughout all Asia as Holy Ground.

Babu Khan, now that he was travelling with me, began to wax communicative. He explained to me that the extraordinary English which he spoke had been picked up

in England. He narrated to me some of his English experiences, and spoke to me of the sultry English climate, the coolie labour on English plantations, the number of Chinamen in the country, and other matters which had escaped my own observation when travelling at home. I asked him in what part of England he had seen these strange things. He replied that he had been in Melbourne, and in a province a long way inland from it, where they grew sugar. He was evidently under the impression that Australia was England!

On the morning of May 5 we appeared to have made little if any progress since the previous evening. There, still close by us, loomed the Takht-i-Suleiman. We had indeed travelled many leagues by water; but the Jhelam, as if loth to leave the pleasant plains for the mountain gorges, pursues its slow course by as sinuous a way as possible, constantly doubling back upon itself in long loops, like the well-known pattern on the Kashmir shawls, which, it is said, was first suggested by these very windings of the river as seen from the summit of the Takht.

There was a good deal of interest to be observed on the river as we progressed up it: huge cargo boats towed laboriously by strings of men; naked fishermen in canoes drawing their nets, of whom my servant would purchase, after much bargaining and ample dasturi, fish for my dinner; wealthy pundits in travelling doongahs with their white-robed wives, and piles of mysterious-looking luggage. On nearing one village I heard a great tumult, and perceived on coming up that all the inhabitants were quarrelling over a mound of grain on the river-bank. It was, I believe, a discussion as to the amount due to the Maharajah as revenue.

On the next morning, May 6, we met two mounted men on the bank. They brought me a letter from Mr Lawrence, who had sent me a horse so that I might ride out to his camp in time for breakfast, leaving the doongah to follow up the winding river.

I found my friend encamped just outside Islamabad in a pleasant orchard by the river, a resting-place of the ancient kings, known as the Wazir Bagh. He was sitting at his tent door, surrounded by a crowd, dispensing justice.

I was in time to witness a strange scene. Two suppliants, who had carefully got themselves up in pitiable plight with a view of attracting sympathy for their cause, came up: These two big men had stripped themselves naked, save for the loin rag, and had smeared their bodies all over with foul wet, blue mud from the river bed. Even their hair and faces were thickly covered with the filth, through which their eyes glittered comically. It was an absurd spectacle, calculated to move one rather to laughter than to tears. They came up, stood before the Settlement Officer, quietly salaamed, and then suddenly and of one accord commenced to weep, groan, and shriek most dismally, while they wrung their hands or clasped them imploringly, writhing their bodies as if in agony. Then they picked up dust in their hands and poured it over their heads and bodies, which rendered their appearance still more fantastic. After a few minutes, Mr Lawrence gave a peremptory word, and they ceased their noise as simultaneously and suddenly as they had commenced it, and both together they poured out their grievance in an eloquent oration.

Their story was, that while they were working in their fields an official had taken from them by force some grass straw of the value of twopence. The said official had moreover plucked their beards; in evidence of which they each produced two or three hairs, which they affirmed had been pulled out. Mr Lawrence told them that he could not listen to men who presented themselves to him in so filthy a condition. If they appeared in the evening clothed and clean he would attend to their case. The Court was therefore adjourned until the plaintiffs should be washed, and we went in to breakfast.

These queer people employ all manner of tricks in order to attract the attention of great men. Once, in Srinagar itself, Mr Lawrence, on coming out of his bungalow, found a strange object in front of his door, surrounded by a contemplative crowd. On walking up to it he discovered that this was an ancient suppliant standing on his head. He had thrown aside his garments, and was thus patiently balancing himself while he awaited the Settlement Sahib's coming out. The Settlement Officer ordered him to be

turned right side up, and the case was forthwith dealt with.

Our Bandobast Wallah, as the people call the Settlement Officer—an instance of the comprehensiveness of that word bandobast to which I have already alluded—had a great task before him when he was set to put the complicated revenue system of this State into order.

The following facts will explain the condition of this primitively governed State, and will show the difficulties the Settlement Officer has to contend with and the direction his labours take.

In the first place it must be understood that all the soil is the property of the Maharajah. The *assami*, or hereditary farmers, cultivate the land and pay, as revenue to the Mararajah, two-thirds of their crops, he supplying seed-corn and cattle when necessary. Of the total produce of the country a smaller portion than two-thirds reaches the coffers of the State; a very meagre proportion remains with the cultivator, the bulk going to the officials who stand between State and cultivator. Under this system much less is produced than would be the case under a better order of things. It is no advantage to the *assami* to get the most he can out of the fertile soil, for any surplus is wrong from him by the tax-farmers.

It is the work of the Settlement Officer to put a stop to this extortion, to hold forth inducements to the *assami* to extend the cultivation of the land by giving them the fruits of their labour, to assess the revenue that shall be paid by each district, and to see that the State be not defrauded of its dues—in short, to better the condition of the cultivators while augmenting the receipts of the Maharajah's treasury.

The revenue of Kashmir is for the most part collected in kind; it is only in the neighbourhood of the towns that the State receives its due in specie. Some of the more absurd forms of payment have been abolished, and maize and rice are the only substitutes for cash now received in the districts near the capital. It had been the custom to accept bulky and perishable commodities, such as apricots, the difficult transport of which across hundreds of miles of mountain tracks resulted in enormous waste.

Such poetic taxes as love-philters and violets seem rather appropriate to the Vale of Kashmir, and these are still levied; for one district has to supply a certain weight of the root of a mountain herb from which love-philters are made, while from another district so many maunds of violets are required annually.

The State officials ascertain the yearly value of the cultivated land of each village community, and raise a revenue proportionate to it. Some villages were formerly grossly over-assessed, while others were equally under-assessed; and therefore one of the Settlement Officer's chief duties is to have a proper survey and valuation of the lands of each village made, and to fix a definite annual revenue in place of the former uncertain and sometimes ruinous demand.

The State is divided for purposes of revenue into districts called *tahsils*, each containing a number of villages, and being under an official known as a *tahsildar*. The *tahsildar* has the civil and criminal jurisdiction over his district, and could, if he misused his power, enrich himself at the expense of justice. He could, on the other hand, if so minded, do much good to the people entrusted to his care.

Each village has its *lumbadar*, a personage with whom every traveller in Kashmir has plenty of dealings; for it is he that is sent for when one enters a village, and he has to provide one with coolies, sheep, fowls, and other necessities. It is he, too, who often receives the pay for these; and how much he retains as his *dastur*, and how much he hands over to the coolies and farmers, it is difficult to say. The *lumbadar* is the hereditary tax-collector of the village. He is responsible to the *tahsildar* of his district for the revenue which he collects, and is supposed to receive about 2 per cent. of it as the reward of his labours. This should be an important and respectable office, but is very far from being so if one may judge from the appearance of the average *lumbadar*. He is generally as dirty and ragged a wretch as any *assami* of his village. A *lumbadar* is, indeed, in some parts of the country not much better than the village scapegoat, and I have known one run away from his home in despair as his village was unable

to meet the requisitions made upon it, and his responsible back had to bear the whole burden.

The assessment in Kashmir is for ten years, not for thirty, as in India, for it is anticipated that the new cart road to the Punjab and the coming railway will greatly increase the value of land, so that an early re-assessment has been deemed necessary in justice to the State.

But an inhabitant of this State suffers from a form of oppression far more severe than the extortion of tax-collectors ; the latter at least leave him a bare subsistence, but that of which I am now speaking signifies separation from family, and in too many cases torture and death. I allude to the "*begar*," or forced labour. An enormous transport service is needed, as I shall show further on, to supply the garrisons on the northern frontier with grain ; and unfortunate wretches are dragged from their homes and families to trudge for months laden with grain over the wearisome marches of that arid country. They fall on the road to perish of hunger and thirst, and, thinly clad as they are, are destroyed in hundreds at a time by the cold on the snowy passes. When a man is seized for this form of *begar*, his wives and children hang upon him, weeping, taking it almost for granted that they will never see him more.

All Hindoos are exempt from forced labour, the burden falling on Mahomedan villages only. Some of these also escape it, for it occasionally happens that a whole village is sold by its cultivators for a nominal sum to some influential Hindoo, on condition that he obtains for them exemption from *begar*, while they remain on the land as his tenants.

Mr Lawrence has now persuaded the Durbar to abolish these exemptions, and make every cultivator—Brahmins only excepted—do his fair share of work. When *begar* has been thus modified and equalised, it will fall but lightly on the population, and will be nothing like so oppressive a burden as is military conscription in European countries.

CHAPTER V

A TOUR WITH THE "SETTLEMENT OFFICER"

AFTER breakfast on the morning of my arrival in camp I rode out with Mr Lawrence, who had some work to complete in the neighbouring villages before holding his Court in the evening.

After visiting some villages, we rode back to camp through a particularly fertile district. Here were orchards of mulberry, apricot, walnut, pear, almond, apple, and other fruit-trees, fields of rice, maize, and the various grains from which oils are extracted.

Whenever we came across waste land it was covered with the blue iris, which spreads all over this country, and is so deep-rooted that it renders the reclamation of the soil difficult. However, it is a favourite food with the sheep, and is dried and stacked for winter fodder. I noticed that the willows by the wayside had been closely pollarded, and that the upper twigs of some had been woven together into what appeared to be large nests. On inquiry I was told that the willow branches, like the iris, are cut for fodder, and that the nests are for the convenience of the small boys who are perched up there when the crops are on the ground, to scare away the crows and stray bears by slinging stones and shouting.

When we returned to camp Mr Lawrence sat in the cool of the evening under the fruit-trees, noisy with the song of birds, and listened to the petitions of the people.

They squatted in a patient, respectful semicircle at a distance from him, while the clerks called them up one by one to come forward and tell their tales. There were several complaints of over-assessment in the district, and the cultivators threatened that they would desert their farms unless a reduction was made. This is a threat which is frequently carried out. But their own village suffers by their desertion, for the annual revenue to the State has to be made up, and the remaining villagers have to pay the share due from the abandoned farm.

On May 8 we continued our progress and visited several villages, two soldiers with lances riding ahead of us to keep

off the people, who crowded up anxiously with their petitions. Each village had its eloquent spokesman, who, when the grievance was a general and not an individual one, pleaded the cause of all the assamis. In one village this orator complained that the villagers were being "choked by their misfortunes." Three years before, when the famine and cholera raged in Kashmir, and killed or drove away one-half of the population of the valley, nearly all the assamis had fled from this village, in which the pestilence had been working exceptional havoc. Only five families had since returned to their homesteads. "Therefore we are not enough," said their spokesman, "to cultivate the lands of the absentees; yet the whole revenue, as before, is demanded of the village. How are we to pay it?" "Would you like other cultivators to come here, take up your abandoned lands, and help you to pay the revenue?" asked Lawrence. "That is what we desire," was the ready reply. The Settlement Officer made a note of the matter, and he told me that he would have no difficulty in finding men willing to take up well-irrigated lands such as these were.

Then we rode off to our next camp near the village of Koil; the laden coolies gradually trooped in, and our servants, accustomed to camp-life, soon had our tents pitched by the apricot-trees on the windy plain, and were preparing our dinner.

The villagers, who had been patiently squatting afar off until Mr Lawrence was ready to receive them, now came up. One old pundit presented himself in tears with a wisp of straw round his neck and a lump of hard clay in his hand. He explained that these symbolised the treatment he had met with. He had been choked to death by his tyrants as by the wisp of straw, and he had been beaten to the earth and crushed as by that bit of clay—in plain words, he wanted his rent reduced a trifle.

The next day, May 10, was the last of this tour, and we rode to the place where we had appointed our doongah to meet us. It was a day full of work for Mr Lawrence. Ahead of us rode the spear-bearing chaukidars in gay uniforms, and behind toiled the long train of coolies carrying our tents and baggage. We always had a crowd about

us ; the cultivators of one district walking with us to the frontier of their land, where they would leave us to the cultivators of the next district, who, in their turn, would escort us through their territory, and so on.

We passed through a village where the village spokesman who came up to disparage the condition of the land and obtain a reduction of the assessed revenue brought with him a lump of stone and some sand in one hand, a few mouldy straws, some grains of diseased rice, and two rotten walnuts in the other, which he represented as fair sample of the soil and produce of their poor property. We were walking between admirable crops and over a rich loam while this orator was addressing us.

As a matter of fact this village was, in consequence of collusion between cultivators and officials, much under-assessed. Mr Lawrence soon discovered this, and informed the spokesman that a larger revenue would be imposed, which the village would be compelled to pay regularly.

And now, the tour being over, we rode down to the river and embarked on our doongahs, having first bidden farewell to the crowds of peasants who had come down to see off their benefactor, the Bandobast Wallah. Their expressions of gratitude to him were effusive. The assamis wept because he was leaving them, and applied to him every term of reverent adulation.

CHAPTER VI

A PICNIC ON THE DAL LAKE—THE FLOATING GARDENS—WE SET OUT FOR LEH—ON THE GREAT TRADE-ROUTE—THE SIND VALLEY—CAPTAIN BOWER'S TIBETAN EXPEDITION—GOOND—SONAMERG—CHITS

As soon as we were settled down in our doongahs, the boatmen paddled, towed, and punted us back to Srinagar with extraordinary energy, so that we reached the city before night. They were delighted when Mr Lawrence gave the order for the homeward journey ; for the morrow was the Eed, the great Mahomedan holiday, when feasting and merrymaking suddenly succeed to the month-long fasting of the Ramazan.

My next expedition was to be to wilder regions, in the company of Captain Bower. I found that he had sent a number of coolies on to Leh with the bulk of the necessities for his long journey across the Tibetan wilderness; but as he had purchased horses at Srinagar, which he purposed to employ for the transport of his stores beyond Leh, and as the road, still deep in snow, was impracticable for animals in places, he was compelled to postpone his departure a little longer. Doctor Thorold, who was to accompany him on his dangerous adventure, had gone on to Leh with the coolies, and had written back a very unfavourable account of the condition of the road.

So I had to pass a few days at Srinagar, where the British summer colony had already collected, and appeared to be enjoying itself thoroughly with dinner-parties, balls, picnics, horse-racing, cricket, polo, and other amusements.

A picnic in the Nasim Bagh, on the shore of the Dal Lake, is an event to be remembered. I was present at one given by the Resident. No more delicious spots can be found for open-air revelry than the fair gardens that surround the capital of Kashmir, where sloping lawns, beautiful groves, flashing cascades and fountains, marble terraces and pavilions, combine to form ideal places for the purpose. Indeed, the genius of picnic seems to rule the whole shores of the Dal; and this is not to be wondered at, for were not these planted by those grand old picnickers, the Emperors Akbar, Jehangir, and Aurungzebe? Often did the fair Noormahal and other ancient queens of beauty picnic in these sweet retreats. I should not be surprised, by the way, if the very word picnic, whose origin, I believe, is unknown, were some old Kashmir name for the pleasant pastime of which this Happy Valley was the birthplace. I am sure that some of our ingenious etymologists could readily prove this.

We repaired to the Resident's picnic by water, in shikarah boats, a journey well worth taking for its own sake. After passing from the Jhelam into the Dal, we traversed a portion of the lake which is so densely overgrown with aquatic plants that it is difficult to realise one is on a lake at all. Tall rushes and reeds, and in places groves of willows rise from the water; and this vegetation is intersected by

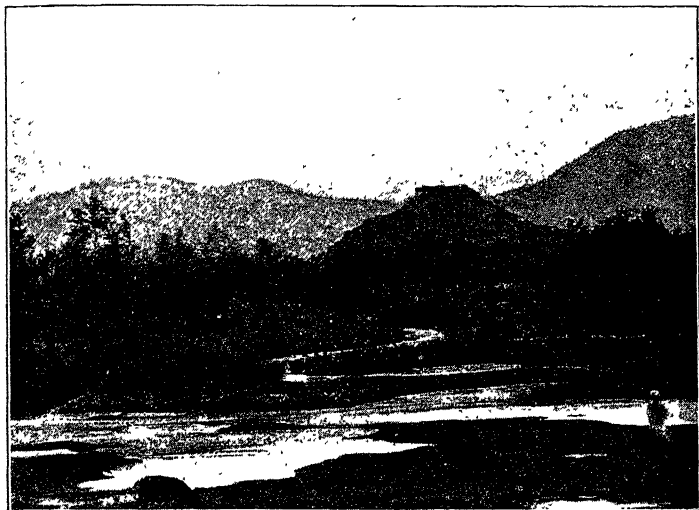
a labyrinth of small channels, through which the boat progresses. These water-alleys are exceedingly pretty: on either side is the fresh, green water-jungle, while in the more open spaces are floating fields of lilies and singharas. The singhara is the Kashmir water-nut, which overgrows many of the lakes and rivers, and furnishes the chief article of food to the fishing-population. This seemed to be a favourite haunt of the golden orioles, which I saw flashing all round me in the sunlight. In places one might have imagined oneself to be on some quiet nook of the Norfolk Broads; but on looking up, the far snowy ranges and the nearer craggy heights of Solomon's Throne and Hari Parbat soon dispelled that illusion.

Here, too, I saw some of those floating gardens of Kashmir of which I had often read. One would not observe these unless one's attention were attracted to them; for they merely look like well-cultivated banks of earth. But the term floating garden is no misnomer. They are not of natural growth, but are constructed by the peasants, who produce upon them cucumbers and other vegetables for the Srinagar market. The following passage from Moorcroft's travels clearly explains how these gardens are formed:—"The roots of aquatic plants growing in shallow places are divided about two feet under the water, so that they completely lose all connection with the bottom of the lake, but retain their former situation in respect to each other. When thus detached from the soil, they are pressed into somewhat closer contact, and formed into beds of about two yards in breadth and of an indefinite length. The heads of the sedges, reeds, and other plants of the float are now cut off and laid upon its surface, and covered with a thin coat of mud, which, at first intercepted in its descent, gradually sinks into the mass of matted roots. The bed floats, but is kept in its place by a stake of willow driven through it at each end, which admits of its rising or falling in accommodation to the rise or fall of the water."

But I had now to put aside for some time the luxury of picnics in the pleasant Happy Valley, for Bower was impatient to be off into the desert lands beyond the Himalayas. From Srinagar to Leh is a distance of 260 miles, divided into nineteen marches, all of which are usually practicable

for baggage-animals. But the road was in so bad a condition after the hard winter, that we knew we should have to employ coolie labour for our baggage, and would be lucky if we got all Bower's horses across the pass unladen.

This is the great trade-route between India and Yarkand *via* the Karakoram Pass, and also between Kashmir and Lassa, and other commercial centres of Tibet and Turkestan; consequently, the road, for a Kashmir road, is a good one; but this is not saying much for it. At its best it is but a



HARI PARBAT.

rough bridle-track, dangerous for ponies at certain points, so that, as on every other route in these regions, the traveller must not be surprised to lose a baggage-animal over the cliff.

The first stage from Srinagar—to Gunderbal—is generally accomplished by water; so the horses and baggage were sent ahead early on the morning of May 17, while we followed later in the day in a rapid shikarah boat. Having traversed the suburbs, we were paddled across the weed-grown Anchar Lake, which brought us to a flowery

pasture-land, where the Sind River, having issued from its mountain gorges, divides into many channels and hurries to the Woolar Lake. We now found the water discoloured by the glaciers and melting snows, and icy cold.

We gradually approached the hill-country, and at last reached the village of Gunderbal, at the very mouth of the Sind Valley; and here, by the river bank, we found our tents pitched and our followers awaiting us. As soon as we had disembarked, a deputation of people came down to us, headed by the lumbadar of Gunderbal, who was anxious to supply us with firewood, sheep, and all else that we might require.

At Gunderbal, all our followers and baggage being collected together, we were able to apportion the loads and ascertain how many coolies or baggage-animals we should require on the road. I found that the belongings of myself and my two servants, including two tents and an abundance of stores, would load fourteen coolies. Dr Thorold had preceded Captain Bower to Leh with the bulk of the stores for their expedition, but there was a goodly pile left to be carried by us. Bower was taking seventeen ponies with him, and intended to purchase others on the road. They looked in good enough condition now, and were to be well fed and exempted from carrying loads until the frontier was crossed; but many were destined to perish later on among the Tibetan wastes.

The men who were to accompany Bower on his expedition were awaiting him here: Mussulmans from Turkestan, Buddhists from Ladak, with hair plaited in queues and amiable Mongolian features, and people of mixed race, known as Argoons. I do not know how many of these accomplished the long journey or how many deserted, but there were, at any rate, two thoroughly reliable men with him, whose tall figures, handsome Aryan faces, and fair complexions distinguished them from the shorter and more swarthy Tatars, who carried the undertaking through to the end. One of these was a young Rajpoot of good family, a Government surveyor keen to distinguish himself as an explorer; the other was Bower's orderly, who had obtained leave to accompany him, a fine young Pathan, with all the pluck, devilry, and love of fun

of his race. Ours was a very Babel of a camp, no less than six languages being regularly spoken in it.

The Sind Valley, which we had now to ascend for our first five marches, is considered to contain some of the loveliest scenery in Kashmir, and though I did not visit it at a favourable season, I could see that it deserved its reputation. At dawn on May 18 our camp was struck, the pack animals which had been hired in the village, and which were to carry our baggage until we got into the snow, were laden, and we commenced our long march, which, for Bower, was to lead to one of the most extraordinary journeys of exploration that has ever been accomplished, for it will undoubtedly be recognised as such when his tale is told. He was to disappear into absolutely unknown regions, the most inhospitable in the world, and be not heard of until he arrived, a year afterwards, on the shores of the Pacific Ocean at Shanghai, having succeeded in considerably altering the aspect of that great blank space in the map which had been such an eyesore to him.

So Bower and myself set out on the morning of May 18, alternately riding and leading two of his horses. Our friend the lumbadar did not encourage us. He said that the pass was impracticable, and that on this side of Sonamerg the road had completely fallen away. On being asked when it would be repaired, he replied that he could not say, but that nothing would be done for some time, as the villagers had no tools to work with. And yet this is the chief road into Central Asia !

Our road lay up the valley, winding along the slopes at some height above the rushing torrent. Here was particularly noticeable a phenomenon which prevails all over Kashmir and in most portions of the Himalayas. Whereas the mountains on our right hand, which faced the north, were clothed with dense forests, those on our left hand, facing the south, were everywhere arid and treeless ; so sharp is the demarcation between the growth on one side and the barrenness on the other side of a mountain, that we could see the tops of the pines forming a dark fringe along the summits of all the bare ridges to our left, showing the limit of the forests rising on the farther side.

This, our first day's march, was an easy one to the village

of Kangan, near which we encamped in a grove of chenars. On the next day we accomplished another stage to Goond. This village is situated amidst the finest scenery of the Sind Valley. The bottom of the valley is here broad and undulating, well-cultivated in places, with groves of fruit-trees surrounding the comfortable-looking farmhouses. The river often divides, enclosing pretty islands of emerald grass or of tangled bushes. A little later in the season, when the roses, jasmine, and honeysuckle, which grow in wild profusion, are in flower, this must be one of the fairest spots on earth. The mountains, which here enclose the valley, rise in forest-clad domes, between which are deep, shady dells, reminding one somewhat of the Jura country.

The next stage to Goond is Gagangir, but on May 20 we made a double march to Sonamerg. The path still wound up the valley, now by the torrent, now high above it. We soon reached our first snow, lying in patches across the road. The vale lost its softer beauties, and narrowed to a grand gorge with towering crags. The difficulties of the road, such as they were, commenced. Down every side-nullah, which clove the precipices on either side, huge avalanches had fallen to the river-bed, and along the very steep slopes of these avalanches our way lay. In places great accumulations of snow filled the bottom of the gorge, through which the torrent had forced a narrow channel, rushing between two walls of snow thirty feet in depth. That the winter had been an exceptional one was testified to by the number of fine trees that had been swept away by the avalanches. It was a wild scene, and the signs of devastation were apparent everywhere. Bower's horses had to be led with great care across these snow-inclines, where a false step would have meant a fall over the cliffs into the foaming, rock-encumbered Sind.

Sonamerg is a miserable little village situated in a very beautiful spot. Here one is no longer in a narrow gorge, for the hills recede and the valley opens out, the river flowing between broad, rolling pastures. The enclosing mountains are of grand outline, and in the lower portions of their deep nullahs are fine pastures; higher up are dark forests of pine, while higher still, above the tree-zone, glittering glaciers are wedged between barren crags.

Sonamerg signifies the Golden Meadow, the yellow crocus, which thickly studs the pastures, no doubt having suggested the name. Here little streams pour down from the surrounding snows and keep these broad pastures green and fresh through the summer heats, and one walks knee-deep in grass and flowers. We had been gradually ascending since we left Gunderbal, and were now 8650 feet above the sea, at about which elevation the pleasantest summer climate is found in Kashmir.

We noticed that from here to the summit of the pass, and beyond, the snow was covered with the corpses of locusts, which, fortunately for the Vale of Kashmir, had attempted a raiding expedition across the Himalayas at too early a season. Later on I came to a dead horde of these rash robbers at a higher altitude than that of the summit of Mont Blanc.

We encamped on a patch of muddy ground where the snow had melted. The wind howled down the valley all night, driving cold rain and sleet before it. It was certain that heavy snow was falling on the pass, and it appeared probable that we should be delayed on this side by bad weather.

We had to change our coolies at Sonamerg. The official in charge of them, who had accompanied us from Goond, of course asked for *bakshish* before he left us, and at the same time requested us to give him a *chit*, or written testimonial. In Kashmir, an enormous and quite fictitious value is set on the *chit*. If one discharges a servant for theft, he will suffer uncomplainingly the mulcting of his pay, but to refuse him a *chit*, even if it state at full all his shortcomings, is almost to break his heart. He undoubtedly prefers to have an abusive *chit* than no *chit* at all, but a *chit* of some sort he must have. So indifferent is he, indeed, as to whether his *chits* praise him or completely take away his character, that he does not take the trouble to get them translated for him by some city *munshi*, but presents them all, good and bad, for your consideration. A man once handed me a *chit* to read. He gazed at me with a look of conscious merit as I read: "This man is the greatest thief and scoundrel generally I have ever come across."

CHAPTER VII

THE WESTERN HIMALAYAN RANGE—THE ZOJI LA—CLIMATE OF LADAK
—TIBETAN SCENERY—TASHGAM

THERE was a keen bite in the air when we set out on the next morning, May 21, from our encampment on the wind-swept plateau. The guide-book describes this, the march to the foot of the Zoji La, as a beautiful one over "rolling meadows"; but for us it was rather over rolling snow. There are no inhabitants at Baltal, but three or four rough stone huts are clustered together, which serve as refuges for the *dak wallahs* and coolies crossing the pass. Here we found thirty coolies that had been sent from the other side by the Thanadar of Dras to assist our men in getting the baggage over. These fresh coolies were natives of the Dras district, stunted and of the Mongolian type—very different-looking people from the handsome Kashmiris, the limit of whose country we had now reached. They were warmly wrapped in shapeless garments, and wore warm mocassins of skins on their feet to preserve them against frostbite.

Their head-man, a weather-wise individual, said the pass was now difficult, but not dangerous, provided the weather was favourable. It was snowing hard when we reached the huts, but he was of opinion that it would clear up later on, and, if it did so, he recommended that we should start at three in the morning, so as to get across the worst part of the pass before the sun should soften the snow. He explained that it would be quite impossible to proceed so long as the snow fell. He informed us that an Afghan horse-dealer on his way from Turkestan to Kashmir, was now weather-bound at Dras. He had attempted the pass two days before, but had to give it up and return, though not before he had lost several of his horses. No horses had yet crossed the pass this year. We heard that a traveller had got over with coolies one moonlight night, when the snow was frozen hard, some weeks earlier; but that a wind had overtaken them, so that they had to leave all the baggage on the summit of the pass and hurry to Matayun for their lives, he and several of the coolies being badly frostbitten.

One has to pick one's weather carefully to cross a Himalayan pass in winter and spring, and when one does get a slant—as they say at sea—one must hurry over quickly; for the sudden, fierce winds that often spring up are then very formidable, and sometimes destroy whole caravans of travellers with their deadly cold. A few months before this 300 mules and their drivers were thus overtaken and lost on the Gilgit road. The Zoji La has a bad reputation for the icy gales that sweep across its exposed snow-downs.

The Western Himalayas traverse the territories of the Maharajah from north-west to south-east; and the Zoji La (La is Tibetan for pass) is the lowest depression in the range, being only 11,500 feet above the sea; consequently, the wind concentrates itself in this deep gap of the great mountain wall, and rushes through it with high velocity.

This range, whose average height must be over 17,000 feet, and which contains, among other peaks, the mighty Nanga Parbat (26,620 feet), divides the Kashmir State into two nearly equal portions, and thus forms a stupendous natural barrier, not only between regions differing widely in climate and in other physical respects, but between peoples as far as possible apart in race and religion.

To the south of the range is the land of the Aryans, to the north the people—save in the Dard districts near Gilgit—are of Mongolian stock. In Ladak, the country we were now to enter, the inhabitants are Buddhists, and though subject to Kashmir, they still look upon the Grand Lama as their real lord. When one is in Ladak one is practically in Tibet; the same strange scenery and climate, the same language, dress, and customs are found in both countries.

The Sikh and Dogra rulers of Kashmir crossed this range, which formed the old natural frontier, and in turn subdued all the countries to the north of it as far as the great watershed of the Karakoram and Hindoo Koosh mountains. They effected the conquest of Ladak between 1834 and 1842.

In Kashmir there is a regular rainfall, even if it be inconsiderable, and the heavy winter snowfall stores the water necessary to refresh the country in the summer months. The contrast between Kashmir and the region beyond the mountains is very remarkable. The rainclouds

from the south, which have come over India from the distant seas, are intercepted by this lofty range. So on crossing the Zoji La one suddenly enters the great bleak wastes of Central Asia, where there is practically no rainfall, and where even the winter snowfall on the mountaintops is but light, so that at 16,000 feet above the sea one often finds no snow left lying in summer.

Ladak, like Chinese Tibet, is for the most part a desert of bare crags and granite dust, with vast arid table-lands of high elevation—a land where there are no forests or pastures, where in places one can march through a long summer's day and never see so much as a blade of grass; but in which, by means of artificial canals bringing down a little water from high snows, small patches of the granite dust are irrigated and carefully cultivated here and there—tiny green oases, so sharply defined from the surrounding desolation that, as Shaw in his book says, they look like bits of some other country cut out with a pair of scissors and dropped into a desert: a cloudless region, always burning or freezing under the clear blue sky; for so thin and devoid of moisture is the atmosphere that the variations of temperature are extreme, and rocks exposed to the sun's rays may be too hot to lay the hand upon at the same time that it is freezing in the shade. To be suffering from heat on one side of one's body while painfully cold on the other is no uncommon sensation here.

Ladak can boast of being the highest inhabited country in the world: the average elevation must be very great. Grain is cultivated in places at 15,000 feet. Leh itself, the capital, is 11,500 feet above the sea, but is considered by the highlanders of the Rupshu district so low as to be unhealthy in summer, and they only visit it in winter. These strange creatures complain of suffocation when they descend to the Vale of Kashmir, and would die if they stayed long in its dense air.

One never hears of any other pass than the Zoji La on the Leh road, for it is here that the southerly wind deposits its heavy burden of snow. As a matter of fact, a great portion of the road beyond is at a considerably higher elevation than Zoji La, but it is not covered with snow.

From the above description one would imagine this barren region to be depressing and uninteresting in the extreme, but it is, on the contrary, fascinating to an extraordinary degree. There are few countries I would so gladly revisit as Western Tibet.

Beyond Dras there was but little snow lying, though occasionally, on the next two marches, we came to avalanche slopes, and had to pick our way across loose moraines of mixed snow and débris; but there were no real difficulties, and we were able to discharge our coolies at Dras and engage horses for our baggage.

On May 24 we descended the valley to Tashgam. The scenery was becoming more Tibetan as we advanced. The mountains were flatter at the top than in Kashmir. The high desert-plateaus so characteristic of Tibet were already extending above us, instead of the serrated and pinnacled ranges we had seen on the other side of the Zoji La. The mountain-sides, too, were of Tibetan character, not clothed with forests or pastures, but formed of piled-up rocks and loose gravel. The only plant-life visible on the barren heights were a few scattered and stunted pencil cedars (*Juniperus excelsa*). There was no grass in the stony valley-bottom; but rose and gooseberry bushes grew on the river brink in places.

Here and there, even on the most arid spots, clumps of a small slate-coloured plant, something like fennel in appearance, were growing. Bower at once recognised this as an old, familiar friend, and explained to me its great merits. This was Boortsa, or Eurotia, an invaluable plant to travellers on the high desert valleys and plateaus of Tibet, and without which vast regions would be quite impassable for man and beast. It is full of an aromatic oil that smells something like camphor. It burns the better the greener it is, as Bower demonstrated by applying a match to a growing clump, which blazed up readily. On those wind-swept, bitterly cold wastes, where there is no wood or grass, the boortsa is often the only fuel, and often the only fodder procurable for one's animals. It was not growing very luxuriantly in this comparatively low-lying and fertile valley. It flourishes best, it seems, in extremely arid regions, and at a higher elevation than we then were.

We put up for the night in the serai of the little village of Tashgam. One need not pitch the tents at any stage between Matayun and Leh, as there are State rest-houses for the accommodation of travellers, for the use of which no charge is made.

At Tashgam we were among Mahomedans converted to Buddhism. They spoke the Tibetan tongue. Instead of the greeting of "salaam," the word with which we had hitherto been welcomed, we were greeted with the Tibetan equivalent, *jooly*.

CHAPTER VIII

KARGIL—OASIS CULTIVATION—TIBETAN TABLE-LANDS—SHERGOL—A
BUDDHIST COUNTRY—THE LAMASERY—RED LAMAS—SKOOSHOKS
—THEORY OF RE-INCARNATION

ON May 25 we travelled two stages to the village of Kargil, a distance of twenty-four miles. This is the capital of the extensive district of the same name. The Thanadar of Dras, who had met us at Matayun, was still with us; but at Kargil he handed us over to the thanadar of that district, who in his turn escorted us to the next district; and so on.

This day the place selected for our midday halt and meal was near the hamlet of Chanegund. There was a characteristic bit of Ladaki scenery on the other side of the river, of which I decided to take a photograph. I was perched on a rock and was about to withdraw the cap from the lens, when a most unexpected gust of wind—for it was a calm day—struck the apparatus, and sent it rolling down the rocks. When I picked it up I found the camera seemingly beyond any possibility of repair in this wild country, where skilled mechanics there were none. My dismay at this catastrophe can be imagined. I was deprived of the means of taking pictures now that I was at the very threshold of one of the most interesting countries in the world to delineate. I gathered the fragments together and marched on, in no good temper with things in general. My foolish Babu Khan tried to sympathise with me. "It must have cost many rupees," he lamented. The waste of hard cash,

and not the irreparable loss of my pictures, was all that he could realise.

From Chanegund our way led through a desert ravine with mighty cliffs towering on either side. The narrow bridle-path was generally high above the torrent, carried along the face of precipices, or winding over great landslips of brown rocks. The road had been broken away a good deal in places, but our surefooted little hill-ponies bore us across with perfect safety.

Not far from Chanegund the Dras stream flows into the Suru River, their united waters joining the Indus some twelve miles farther on. Here the Indus is hemmed in by such lofty precipices, rising for many thousands of feet on either side above the raging torrent, that the natives, adepts as they are at opening out hill-tracks, throwing frail wooden scaffoldings and ladders from ledge to ledge across the faces of cliffs, have not found it possible to make a coolie-road of the roughest description—and what is called a rough road in this country is calculated to make one's hair stand on end. The road to Leh, therefore, instead of following the Indus valley, diverges along a tributary of the Suru, and after crossing two passes rejoins the Indus Valley near Khalsi.

Kargil, our this day's destination, is the most extensive oasis in this part of the country. It fills a broad and beautiful vale, which the Suru River enters, and out of which it flows, by narrow gorges. Though surrounded by bare mountains, this green valley has a very pleasing appearance after the desolate country that is traversed to approach it.

As we neared the serai, the Thanadar of Kargil, accompanied by several gaily-attired notables, rode out to meet us. They brought us the usual *dalīs*, or presents, as tokens of their respect: large metal dishes of dried currants and apricots, and a basket of sugar candy. They also held out rupees to us in their open hands, a generosity which, like the courteous Spaniard's gifts, must, of course, not be understood too literally. The proper thing is to touch the proffered coins with one's finger, in polite signification of acceptance, but not to take up the rupees.

As soon as we were settled in the rest-house, on an open whitewashed verandah, where we put up our beds and table,

and made ourselves generally at home in full view of the admiring population, which crowded round to gaze at us, I bethought myself of my wrecked camera, and after an examination was inclined to think that I could patch it up sufficiently for use if I had the necessary tools. I consulted the lumbadar, who told me that there was a very clever carpenter in the village, for whom he would at once send.

This skilful artificer soon arrived: a good-natured Ladaki. He spoke little, considered the ruins of the camera, nodded his head as if perfectly satisfied with his capacity for dealing with the job, went off, and came back with a hatchet, a sledge-hammer, a large coarse saw, and a drill three-quarters of an inch in diameter. What he proposed to do with the camera I know not; but I rescued it from his hands just as he was about to attack it with the saw!

The wooden framework of the camera had been broken in several places, and the bellows were torn away. It was not an easy business to tackle without tools, but I set to work, so anxious was I not to be deprived of my means of taking pictures. I procured some glue, and employed this where possible; then I extracted a few superfluous screws from the apparatus, and with them screwed together the broken portions. The only tool at my disposal for boring the preliminary holes for these screws was a large needle, which I made red-hot with a candle-flame and an improvised paper blowpipe, a tedious but successful process, which surprised and delighted the crowd of spectators. Then I replaced the broken focus-glass with a half-plate, from which I had washed off the chemicals, and on which I had pasted a bit of tissue paper; and at last, to my own astonishment and great satisfaction, the camera was mended and apparently solid enough. For all practical purposes it indeed proved as good as ever. The good-natured people round seemed as pleased as I was at my success, and a chorus of some Tibetan equivalent for bravo greeted the result of my labours.

Our next march—May 26—took us through scenery of true Tibetan aspect. Close to Kargil the road leaves the valleys. We ascended the bare mountain-side, and

found ourselves on a stony table-land of considerable elevation. From here we perceived many similar plateaus all round us. The sky was cloudless and of the beautiful transparent pale blue characteristic of the Tibetan regions. The wind, too, up here was of Tibetan keenness, absolutely dry, and deliciously bracing.

In this thin, dry air, far-off objects appear quite near ; mountains sixty miles away might be heaps of stones forty yards off, and *vice versa*. There is no atmospheric effect to give any idea of distance. It is impossible here to judge the distance of even familiar objects whose size one knows, for the air has a curious magnifying effect, due to a form of mirage. Black yaks or sheep on far hillsides appear monstrously big ; a solitary tree, plainly visible, may be two days' journey off. We saw a woman walking in the valley below us ; she looked like a giantess. There was a lack of proportion and perspective that produced a strangely unreal effect. It was like a land in a dream.

After crossing this table-land we descended to the valley of the Wakka, a small tributary of the Suru. We passed the village and fair oasis of Paskil, and rode into a strange gorge, with rock pinnacles on either side, shaped like castle towers and cathedral spires. The scenery was becoming more uncanny as we advanced, which was as it should be ; for we were now entering the country of those uncanny people, the Tibetan Buddhists. We followed this wild defile for many miles, the road crossing the torrent several times, and often zigzagging high up the cliff-side in order to avoid projecting spurs. At last, after a rather long day's march, and being utterly weary of these imprisoning crags, we suddenly opened out another of those pleasant cultivated vales that are so grateful to the traveller, and perceived our welcome destination, the village of Shergol, ahead of us.

This is the first Buddhist village on the road. It is a labyrinth of rather well-built mud houses, with narrow alleys between. The curious, calm people were sitting on the flat roofs as we approached and appeared to be meditating. Towering above the houses were gigantic *chortens*, or sarcophagi, of dried mud, gaily painted, containing the ashes of pious lamas.

On the mountain-side, near the village, is a *gompa*, or monastery of lamas, to which I hastened with my camera as soon as we had established ourselves in the serai. The illustration will show what this extraordinary place is like. The Buddhist of Tibet, while he despises the beautiful, has a love for the grotesque in Nature. He builds his monastery on what to ordinary men would appear to be the most undesirable spot possible: he perches it on the summit of some almost inaccessible



SHERGOL GOMPA.

pinnacle, or burrows into the face of a precipice. The Lamasery, or Gompa, of Shergol, is carved out of a honey-combed cliff, forming with some other cliffs of the same description a giant flight of stairs on the slope of a bleak mountain of loose stones. The gompa itself is painted white, with bands of bright colour on the projecting wooden gallery, so that it stands out distinctly against the darker rocks. There is not a sign of vegetation near; all round is a dreary waste of stones alone.

From this lamas' retreat the view of the mountains on the other side of the broad valley is in itself particularly

fantastic. I shall often have to employ this last adjective when writing of Ladak. It expresses the genius of the land. The country itself is fantastic, and the fantastic race who dwell in it do all they can to assist Nature, and make their surroundings still more fantastic than they are. The mountains which face the monastery are of considerable height, and from this distance appear smooth, falling to the bed of the river, in regular furrows and waves, like those one often sees on a stream of lava that has cooled. These undulations are of various vivid colours—great streaks, a mile long, of pink, ochre, white, green, blue, brick-red, and here and there coal-black. The effect is very curious.

All the men in Shergol wore queues in the Chinese fashion, and had features of the pure Tibetan type, there being little, if any, admixture of Aryan blood here. I soon realised that I had reached a very strange land, a country of topsy-turveydom, where polyandry prevails instead of polygamy, where praying is all conducted by machinery, and where, in short, the traveller fresh from beyond the mountains is bewildered by the quaint sights, the strange beliefs, superstitions, and customs he comes across every day.

I did not visit the interior of Shergol monastery, but walked across the stony desert to the foot of it, and saw for the first time the lamas I had so often heard of, who passed by me as if not observing me, evincing no curiosity, not even saluting me with a jooly, but apparently wrapped in their own thoughts.

These were Red lamas, who alone are found in Ladak; whereas the Yellow lamas, who are in many respects more ascetic and strict than the Red, are the prevalent sect in Chinese Tibet. The Red lamas are, for the most part, as dirty and ragged as the itinerant beggar-monks of Southern Europe, whom they much resemble in appearance. One could not fail at once to recognise these men as monks.

The Red lama wears a red petticoat, and throws over his shoulders a large red shawl, which leaves his left arm bare. His head is close-shaven, and when out of doors he dons a little red cap with ear-flaps, of the same shape as that worn by the laity. He always carries about with him a praying-wheel, a rosary, and a bottle of holy water.

The lamaseries appear to be organised in a very business-like way. There are two classes of monks in each. There are, in the first place, the working monks, who attend to the temporal interests of the community. These cultivate the land, collect the rents of the monastery tenants, travel through the villages to beg alms for the brotherhood, and advance coin and grain to farmers at interest. The second class is composed of the spiritual monks, who have nothing to do with worldly matters, but devote their time to dreaming and religious exercises. From this class the abbot is chosen, and in a few cases a monastery has as its spiritual head a very holy person indeed, no less than a skooshok, or incarnation. When Lord Roberts visited Srinagar, the Skooshok of Spitak Gompa was presented to him. This personage was said to have been re-incarnated seventeen times, and in his first incarnation to have been a contemporary of Buddha.

CHAPTER IX

CHARACTER OF THE LADAKIS—THEIR DRESS—THE PEYRAK—MANIS
AND CHORTENS—MULBEK

HAVING photographed the gompa, I returned to the serai, in front of which I found a crowd assembled, Bower in the midst of them, bargaining over some horses that had been brought for his inspection. These men did not jabber and lie, but argued the point out in a quiet, frank, good-humoured way that impressed one favourably. One comes to like these amiable Ladaki Buddhists; they are highly spoken of by all who have travelled in their country, as being truthful, honest, hospitable, and straightforward. They are a harmless, simple race, with no bigotry or prejudice. A Ladaki Buddhist has no objection to eating food with a Christian, or to drinking out of a cup that has been used by him. He does not hide his women from our gaze, and these uncomely creatures wander about openly and unveiled, look the Englishman fearlessly in the face, and greet him with a cheerful smile. All this makes Ladak a far pleasanter land to travel in than either a

Hindoo or a Mahomedan country, with their barriers of reserve and seclusion, which make it so extremely difficult for the stranger to acquire any but the most superficial knowledge of them. The Ladaki, on the other hand, will welcome one to his house, admit one into his most sacred buildings, and allow one to be present at any of his religious ceremonies, concealing nothing, and ready to give any explanation that is required of him.

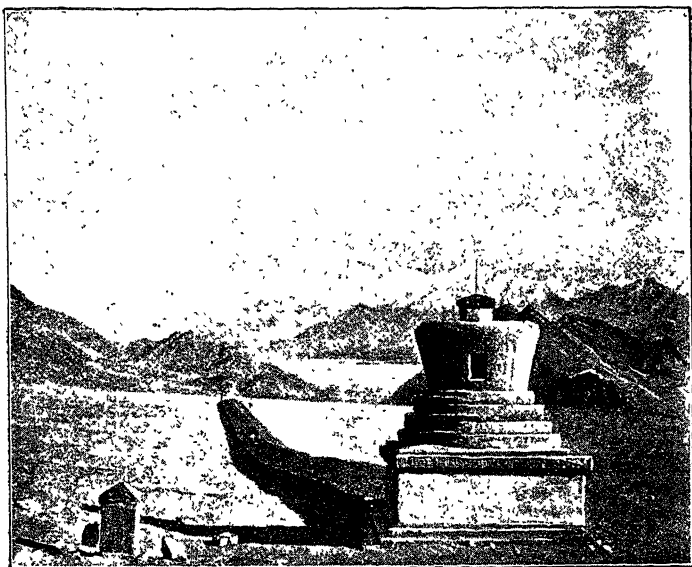
In Ladak both men and women are warmly clothed, even in summer. The man's costume consists of a thick woollen



LADAKI WOMEN, WEARING THE PEYRAK.

frock reaching to the ankles, girded in the middle with a cloth band; on the head is a little cloth cap with two earflaps, which are generally turned up. The women wear frocks reaching to their ankles, thick cloaks of sheepskin, and boots. Their coiffure is peculiarly unbecoming. On either cheek hangs a great bunch of hair, while the ornament known as the *peyrak*, which is peculiar to ladies of Tibet, covers the top of the head and falls some way down the back. The *peyrak* is a piece of leather studded with flat turquoises; it is about two feet in length and about eight inches broad. All the personal property of a Ladaki woman is invested in the turquoises of her *peyrak*.

On May 27 we had an interesting march of eighteen miles to Kharbu. Outside Shergol we saw the first mani, or wall of praying-stones. The illustration represents a typical mani. This is a massive stone wall or embankment about eight feet in height, its top sloping from the centre to either side, like the roof of a house. Every one of the large flat



MANI AND CHORTENS.

stones that form this roof is elaborately carved in the pictorial characters of Tibet with prayers, generally with the inscription, "*Om mani patmi Om*," a prayer that is repeated in a variety of ways many millions of times each day in this country, and which is, perhaps, the most largely employed prayer in the universe. The translation of these mystic syllables is merely, "*O! thou jewel in the Lotus, O!*"

These walls of stone, some a mile in length, are found everywhere in Ladak, generally at the entrance of villages, but sometimes far away from any habitation. The stones



ROCK IMAGE NEAR MULBEK.

forming a mani vary in size from a few inches to four or five feet in diameter. The carvings are often artistic and beautiful. Images of Buddha and designs of mystic figures are represented upon them, as well as prayers. The carving is done by pious lamas, generally from Lassa, who travel through Buddhist countries in order to perform this duty.

At either end of the mani in the illustration is a large chorten, of the shape most frequently met with in Ladak. After the corpse of a Buddhist has been burnt by the lamas, some of the ashes of the dead man are mixed with clay and moulded into a little idol, which, if the deceased was a man of wealth, is placed by itself in the middle of a chorten built expressly for it; if he was a poor man, his idol is placed in some old chorten, with other idols of the poor. I have found the cavities of ancient chortens filled with these little images.

About three miles from Shergol we passed the village of Mulbek, a curious place, with many manis and chortens, and a monastery perched on the rocks above. By the roadside near the village is a colossal idol of the god Chamba, carved on the face of an isolated rock. The idols of Ladak were, of course, regarded by Subhana and our other Mussulman followers with contempt.

When we entered the village of Mulbek the male population was sitting in groups, silent and motionless, on the flat house-tops. As we passed each house, the men on the roof would rise to their feet of one accord, make an obeisance, utter the word of greeting—jooly—in solemn chorus, squat down again simultaneously, and then in a moment become apparently quite oblivious of us, and lapse into silent meditation. There was something very weird in this performance; but it was quite in accord with the spirit of this enchanted land. There were many little black cattle in the alleys of the village, and the tiniest and tamest goats I have ever seen came out of the houses to make friends with us. The Ladaki goats are the prettiest creatures of their kind, with long, soft hair; but they are very perky and conceited. All domestic animals are remarkably tame in Ladak; for Buddhists treat with kindness those forms of life into which it may be their

lot to be re-incarnated some day. Not only man, but also all creatures under his domination—horses, sheep, goats, fowls—are diminutive here; whereas the wild animals on the high mountains are of gigantic size—the *Ovis poli*, for example, that giant among sheep.

CHAPTER X

CITY OF LEH—MORAVIAN MISSION HOSPITAL—BOWER'S PREPARATIONS

ON June 1, our sixteenth day out from Srinagar, we marched two stages and completed our journey to Leh.

We rode on after our tiffin, with our escort, across burning sands and pebbly wastes till we came to the isolated rock of Pitak, rising from the river-bank, with an ancient gompa and fort at its summit. Here two spurs of the mountain-range to the north of the Indus open out, leaving a great sand plain between them. At the head of this plain, about five miles from the Indus, stands the city of Leh, surrounded by cultivated fields, groves of lofty poplars and other trees. The streams that flow down from the nullahs behind it and water this oasis are afterwards sucked up by the arid sands, and never reach the Indus. The Indus at Pitak is 10,500 feet above the sea, Leh is 11,500 feet, so that one gradually ascends 1000 feet in the course of the five miles' journey across the sands.

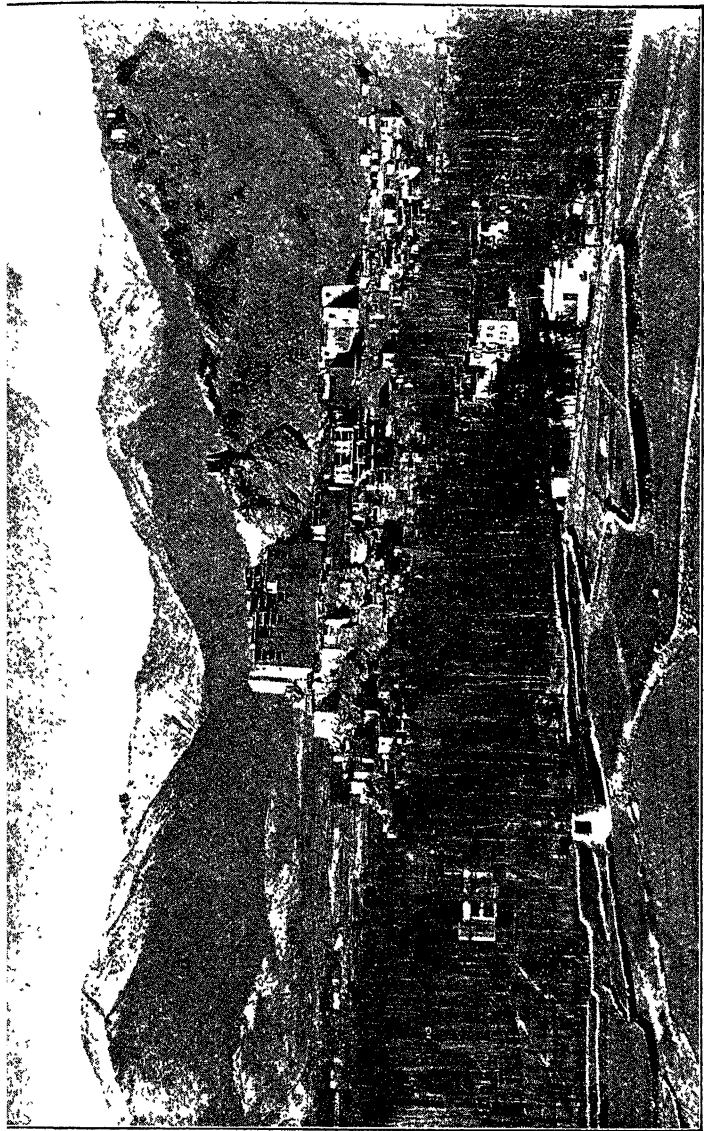
As one approaches this important city, the capital of Western Tibet and of Western Buddhism, it presents a really imposing appearance. Towering above all the groves and houses stands the massive palace of the deposed *Gyalpos*, or Rajahs of Ladak, with many irregular storeys and lofty, inleaning walls, and with giant chortens containing the ashes of kings surrounding it. Higher up, on the crags behind, is the gompa, and behind all rises a mighty snow-covered mountain range, across which roads lead into Turkestan and Tibet.

We rode up to the city, passed through the walls by a small wicket-gate, and found ourselves at the head of the

bazaar, which has been built since the Dogra conquest—a long, broad street, such as Srinagar cannot boast, bordered by the shops of the merchants, and with the great white palace rising conspicuously at the farther end. The passing through this wicket into the bazaar is a sudden burst from the wilds into civilisation. The merchants, many of whom are white-robed Hindoos from Kashmir, were sitting cross-kneed among their wares at the entrance of their shops. But the bazaar was comparatively deserted at this early season. I was informed that later on, when the passes into Central Asia are open, this place would be full of life, and be exceedingly picturesque and interesting for a stranger to behold.

Leh, conveniently situated as it is about half-way between the markets of India and those of Central Asia, has become the terminus for the caravans from both regions. In the summer, traders arrive at Leh from India, Turkestan, Tibet, Siberia, and the remotest districts of Central Asia. Here the goods and produce of the south are exchanged for those of the north. It is seldom that a caravan from India goes north of Leh, or that one from Central Asia proceeds south of it. The merchants, who have been travelling for months along the difficult roads from either direction, meet here and dispose of their loads, to a great extent by barter; but before they commence the long, weary homeward journey, they rest here for a month or two, so that the bazaar and the environs of the city are thronged with the camels, yaks, and other beasts of burden, as well as with men from all corners of Asia. At this time there is such a motley collection of types and various costumes, and such a babel of different languages, as it would not be easy to find elsewhere.

We found at the Residency Dr Thorold, who was to accompany Bower on his adventurous journey, and who had preceded him with the stores. It was lucky he had done so, for there was no doctor in Leh, and Dr Thorold had been of great service in attending on the Moravian missionaries, all of whom had been attacked by fever. After talking the matter over with him, Bower decided not to proceed on his journey until they were out of all danger, and stood in no further need of medical assistance.



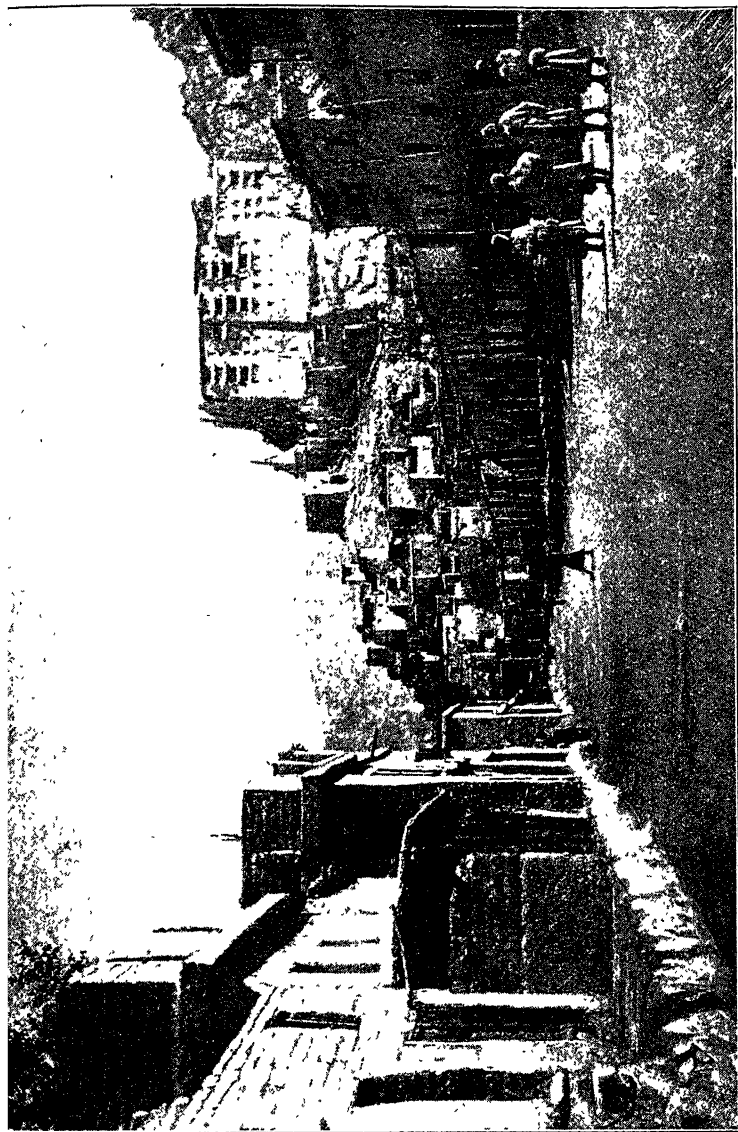
LEH.

The Moravians maintain a little hospital at Leh. The perpetual dustiness of the air, and the manner of their life in winter, makes the natives of Ladak particularly subject to ophthalmia and other diseases of the eye, for the treatment of which they flock to the hospital in great numbers. In one year Dr Marx, of the Mission, performed thirty operations for cataract alone.

The province of Ladak is governed by a Wazir; but this official remains in Jummoo, while his lieutenant, the Naib Wazir, has his residence in Leh. This gentleman treated Bower and myself with the greatest kindness, and did all that was in his power to assist us.

He carefully selected the explorer's Ladak followers for him, and cautiously made inquiries as to the character and resources of the country into which Bower was first to penetrate on crossing the frontier. Little information could be obtained concerning it, save that it was unpopulated, desert, and considered impassable. It was a *terra incognita* even to the nomads.

I began to realise what an adventuresome expedition this was of Bower and Thorold. They were now about to plunge into an absolutely unexplored region, a region of the most elevated table-lands in the world, where even the very valley-bottoms are higher above the sea than the summit of Mont Blanc; to discover their own passes across huge mountain-ranges; probably for weeks, if not for months, at a time to depend entirely on the supplies they were carrying with them, finding neither fuel nor grass by the way; possibly, after long, arduous journeys across the mountain solitudes, to arrive at insuperable natural barriers, compelling them to retrace their steps and commence again in some other direction; to be boycotted by the inhabitants of the regions through which they passed, or to meet with still more active hostility; to encounter the deadly cold of the Tibetan tempests; to lose most of their animals on the road; and to run no inconsiderable risk of perishing, with all their following, on the inhospitable deserts. But Bower was resolved to clear up the geographical problems of this mysterious and unknown land. With his discoveries he would fill up that great blank space on the map of Asia. As the world now knows, he accom-



plished his task ; after a year's wanderings, unheard of, their fate altogether unknown, the two Englishmen at last re-appeared at Shanghai, to the relief of all their friends.

My own programme was, after seeing the interesting Buddhist festival at Himis, to march across-country to Gilgit, at the farther extremity of the Kashmir State, where I had arranged to meet Spedding. I had also to await at Leh a reply from our Resident at Srinagar, to whom I had applied for permission to travel on the Gilgit road.

CHAPTER XI

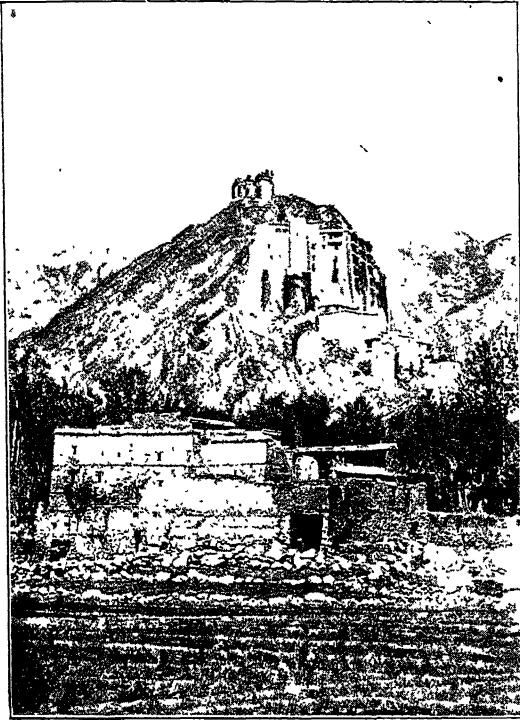
POLO AT LEH—PILGRIMAGE TO HIMIS

I passed my time very pleasantly at Leh for a few days, wandering about the environs and taking photographs. The Naib Wazir also got up some amusements for us, notably polo, the indigenous game of all the highland country between Tibet and Chitral, as well as of Manipur. At Leh it is the custom to play in the bazaar, all business being suspended for the purpose. The Naib Wazir issued the order, all the shops were closed, and the strains of a band, in which kettle-drums, trumpets, and *surnais*—the sound of which last is like that of bagpipes without the drone—were the principal instruments, gave notice to the citizens that the play was about to commence. The players were all Ladakis, mounted on capital little ponies. We sat on the flat roof of the Court House, with the Naib Wazir and other notables, to view the spectacle, while the populace crowded all the other roofs on either side of the ground. The band played without pause, the air always becoming more rapid and noisy when either side was approaching a goal, and subsiding to low and querulous notes if the chance were lost. When a goal was won there would be a triumphant and discordant outburst of music. In some parts of Baltistan it is the custom for the beaten side to dance for the amusement of the spectators.

Bower's and Thorold's stay at Leh enabled us to be spectators together of what is certainly one of the strangest

religious festivals in the world, the far-famed fair of Himis Gompa.

This large monastery is two marches from Leh up the



RAJAH'S PALACE, LEH.

Indus Valley. It contains accommodation for 800 monks and nuns. The annual festival that is held there continues for two days, and attracts great numbers of Buddhists from Chinese Tibet as well as from Ladak, the Yellow lamas and nuns from Lassa mingling with their Red brethren of Western Tibet.

On Sunday, June 14, we set out for Himis Fair. We

formed quite an imposing cavalcade : for the Naib Wazir, the Treasurer of Ladak, and other dignitaries who were to be present at the festival, accompanied us.

Great manis and chortens bordered our road down to the Indus, which we crossed by a wooden bridge. In front of us, lying in a broad hollow in the mountains, was an irrigated oasis with several buildings, and one rather imposing edifice standing amid the orchards. This is Stok, the estate of the Gialpo, or Rajah of Ladak, the grandson of the ruler who was overthrown by the Dogras. The Gialpo is treated with the greatest respect by the Ladakis, who still look up to him as their prince. He enjoys a reputation for great piety and erudition in Buddhist literature. He is completely priest-ridden, and passes most of his time in solitary devotion and in theological converse with learned lamas.

We rode up the left bank of the Indus, and formed part of a great straggling crowd travelling in the same direction as ourselves. Nearly all these people were mounted, and were dressed in their gayest attire, making a great display of China silks and Tibetan turquoises. There were merry little family parties, jogging along on small ponies. There were plenty of red-robed lamas too, who were journeying to Himis from distant gompas, and a goodly number of stately turbaned merchants from Leh—Hindoos and Mahomedans. Mongolian Buddhists formed the bulk of the crowd. They were bent on enjoying their three days' holiday at Himis, and were in the highest spirits, and ready to crack a joke with us as we passed. The Ladakis thoroughly relish a bit of buffoonery on occasion, and indulged in rollicking horseplay. It was a motley and lively procession, a sort of Tibetan version of a Canterbury Pilgrimage.

At the entrance of the Himis nullah we passed through some good land with well-irrigated and carefully-cultivated terraces, promising abundant crops of grain and fruit. Struck by the prosperous appearance of this oasis, I made inquiry of my companions, and learnt that this was, as I had suspected, Church property, being held by zemindars of the monastery on the Metayer system, the tenants handing over one-half of the produce to the lamas, and being

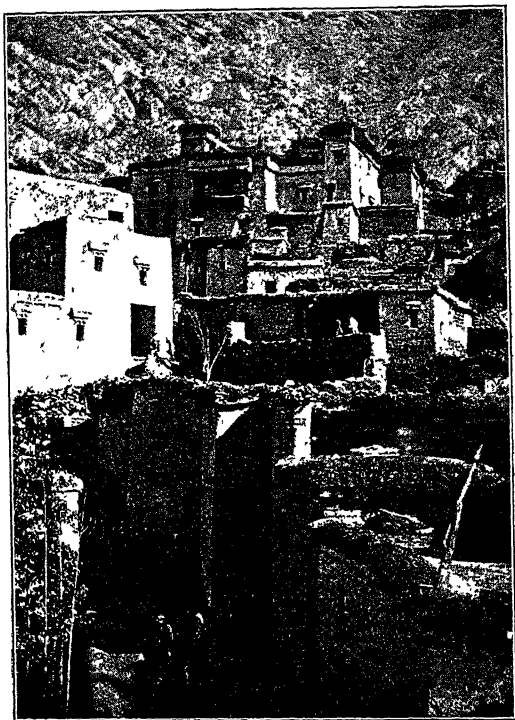
practically exempt from taxation and begar. We rode up a savage ravine, which formed a fitting approach to the sacred place. The scenery was barren for the most part ; but the torrent was bordered by dense groves. The signs of Buddhist worship were everywhere around us : manis lined the steep path, and every prominent crag was crowned with chorten, altar, or hermitage. At last, on turning a corner, a most picturesque sight burst upon us. The vast lamasery stood before us, perched high up on the rugged rocks, with wild mountains forming a fine background to the picture. Himis is at a much greater height above the sea than Leh, and in every shaded hollow of the gorge the snow was still lying.

We reached the main gate of the gomba ; and here some monks took charge of us and led us to our quarters through that great rambling edifice of weird sights, across strange courtyards fantastically decorated, where huge and ugly Tibetan mastiffs of yellow colour, sacred creatures of the gomba, barked furiously at us as we passed, and strained at their stout chains, eager to fly at the intruders' throats ; along dim, narrow alleys, where dripping water turned the praying-wheels, and where hand-wheels and other facilities for devotion met one at every turn ; up steep, winding flights of stairs ; across wooden galleries overhanging abysses. Everywhere we were surrounded by uncanny objects. The walls were covered with frescoes of grotesque gods and frightful demons ; banners with monstrous designs waved over us ; and, not the least uncanny, the Red lamas, with their dark rags and shaven heads, kept flitting by us with noiseless footsteps, whispering to one another after the peculiar manner of this country—so low a whisper that no sound was audible even when we were quite near ; and it appeared as if they were conversing by watching the silent movements of each other's lips, as do our own deaf and dumb.

The Abbot of Himis treated us with great hospitality. Comfortable chambers were placed at our disposal in a high turret of the gomba, commanding a splendid view down the nullah, across the Indus Valley, to the snowy range beyond—a depression in which was pointed out to me by Bower as the Chang La, by which lay his road to

China. The steward of the gompa also kindly sent us presents of provisions—sheep, rice, and sugar—and did not forget the jars of cheering chung.

From an overhanging gallery close to our quarters we



HIMIS TOWN.

could look down on what may be described as the chief quadrangle of the gompa, the one in which the religious mummeries were to take place. In the centre of the flagged courtyard stood a lofty pole hung with gaily-coloured streamers, on which dragons and mystic signs were delineated. Banners and beautiful silk draperies, with similar quaint figures worked upon them, depended from

the walls. On that side of the quadrangle which faced us was the porch of the temple, with steps leading up to it, its columns and friezes being painted in rich red, green, and brown tints. On the side to our right the building was only one storey high, and had a gate under it leading to the outer precincts of the monastery. Towering over this building could be seen the houses of the little town of Himis perched upon the bare crags. Praying-flags were fluttering everywhere on the roofs of the gompa and the houses.

CHAPTER XII

THE MYSTERY PLAY AT HIMIS—THE LAMA MASK—THE DEVIL DANCE—
A HARLEQUINADE—RETURN TO LEH—THE LAMASERY OF TIKZAY
—THE SKOOSHOK

At an early hour of the morning of June 16 we were awakened to a realisation of where we were by the sounding of the priestly shawms in different quarters of the great monastery. We arose, and found it had been snowing in the night, and the distant mountains were white almost down to the level of the Indus.

After breakfast we repaired with the Naib Wazir, the Treasurer, and other notables to the gallery overlooking the quadrangle, where seats had been prepared for us. The jovial Treasurer, finding that I appreciated the national beverage, produced at intervals flowing bowls of chug to cheer us as we gazed at the successive whirling troops of devils and monsters that passed before us.

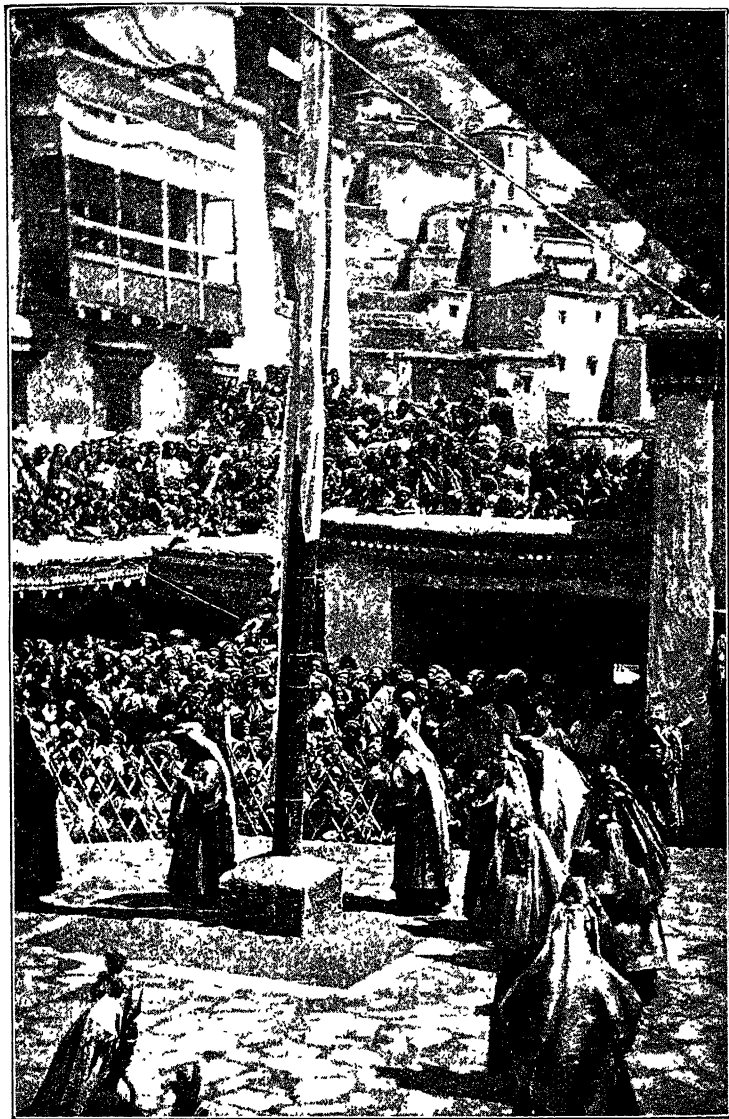
The great crowd had already collected—men and women of Ladak and Chinese Tibet, lamas and nuns red and yellow, and a sprinkling of Hindoos and Mussulmans, filling the galleries, covering the roofs, and squatting on the floor all round the quadrangle. Several sepoy of the irregular Ladaki levy—in the Ladaki dress, and not in the least like soldiers—and lamas with scourges in their hands, kept the spectators in order, and prevented them from pressing on to the space reserved for the performers. In a state-box of the gallery opposite to us, hung with silken draperies,

sat the Gialpo, or deposed Rajah of Ladak, with his suite and attendant lamas. Though of the same Mongolian stock as his people, he was of much fairer complexion ; his features were refined, having much of the pure beauty of asceticism, contrasting strangely with the ignoble faces around.

It is difficult to give an account of the ever-changing and very interesting mummary which was carried on for the whole of this long summer's day—a bewildering phantasmagoria of strange sights, a din of unearthly music, that almost caused the reason to waver, and make one believe that one was indeed in the magic realm represented by the actors. For the principal motive of this mystery play appeared to be as follows :—The soul of man has its being in the midst of malignant demons—the earth, the air, the water crowded with them—perpetually seeking to destroy him. Against this infinite oppression of the powers of evil he can of himself do nothing, but that the prayers of some good lama or incarnation may come to his assistance and shield him from the devils for a time, until the shrieking demons close in upon his soul again. Such is the gloomy prospect of human existence as depicted by the Tibetan lamas.

The extraordinary resemblance between much of the pageantry and forms of Tibetan Buddhism and those of the Church of Rome has been observed by all travellers in these regions. The lamas had the appearance of early-Christian bishops : they wore mitres and copes, and carried pastoral crooks ; they swung censers of incense as they walked in procession, slowly chanting. Little bells were rung at intervals during the ceremony ; some of the chanting was quite Gregorian. There was the partaking of a sort of sacrament ; there was a dipping of fingers in bowls of holy water ; the shaven monks who were looking on, clad almost exactly like some of the friars in Italy, told their beads on their rosaries, occasionally bowed their heads and laid their hands across their breasts ; and there was much else besides that was startlingly familiar to a European.

I will only attempt the description of some of the principal features of this two days' complicated ceremony, to



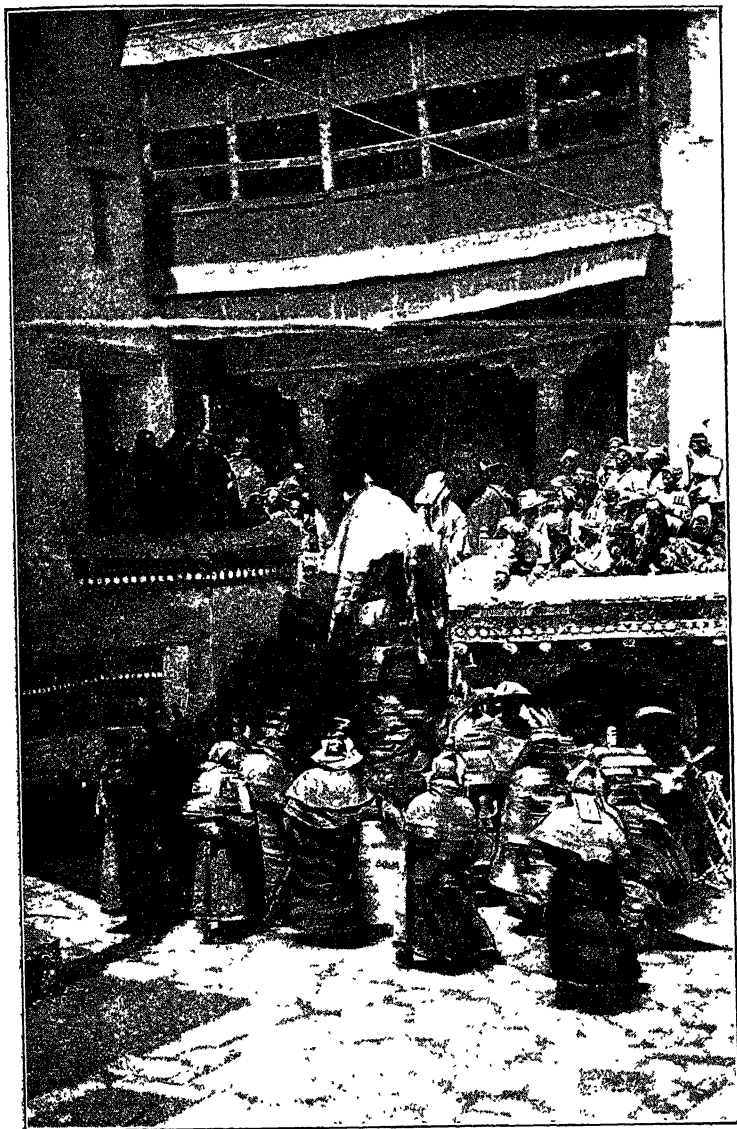
THE MYSTERY PLAY, HIMIS.

rehearse for which is one of the chief occupations of the lamas throughout the year.

The musical instruments employed by the lama orchestra on this occasion included shawms and other huge brazen wind instruments, surnais, cymbals, gongs, tambourines, and rattles made of human bones. The many-coloured and grotesquely-designed robes worn by the mummers were of beautiful China silk, while the masks exhibited great powers of horrible invention on the part of their makers.

The gongs and shawms sounded, and the mummery commenced. First came some priests with mitres on their heads, clad in rich robes, who swung censers, filling the courtyard with the odour of incense. After a stately dance to slow music these went out ; and then entered, with wild antics, figures in yellow robes and peaked hoods ; flames and effigies of human skulls were on their breasts and other portions of their raiment. As their hoods fell back, hideous features were disclosed. Then the music became fast and furious, and troop after troop of different masks rushed on, some beating wooden tambourines, others swelling the din with rattles and bells. All of these masks were horrible, and the malice of infernal beings was well expressed on some of them. As they danced to the wild music with strange steps and gestures, they howled in savage chorus.

The loud music suddenly ceased, and all the demons scampered off, shrieking as if in fear, for a holy thing was approaching. To solemn chanting, low music, and swinging of censers, a stately procession came through the porch of the temple and slowly descended the steps. Under a canopy borne by attendants walked a tall form in beautiful silk robes, wearing a large mask representing a benign and peaceful face. As he advanced, men and boys prostrated themselves before him, and adored him with intoning and pleasing chanting. He was followed by six other masks, who were treated with similar respect. These seven deified beings drew themselves up in a line on one side of the quadrangle, and received the adoration of several processions of masked figures, some of abbots, and others beast-headed, or having the faces of devils. " Those seven masks," said the Treasurer to us, " are representations of the Delai Lama of Lassa and his previous incarnations. They are being



MASK OF THE DELAI LAMA DESCENDING THE TEMPLE STEPS.

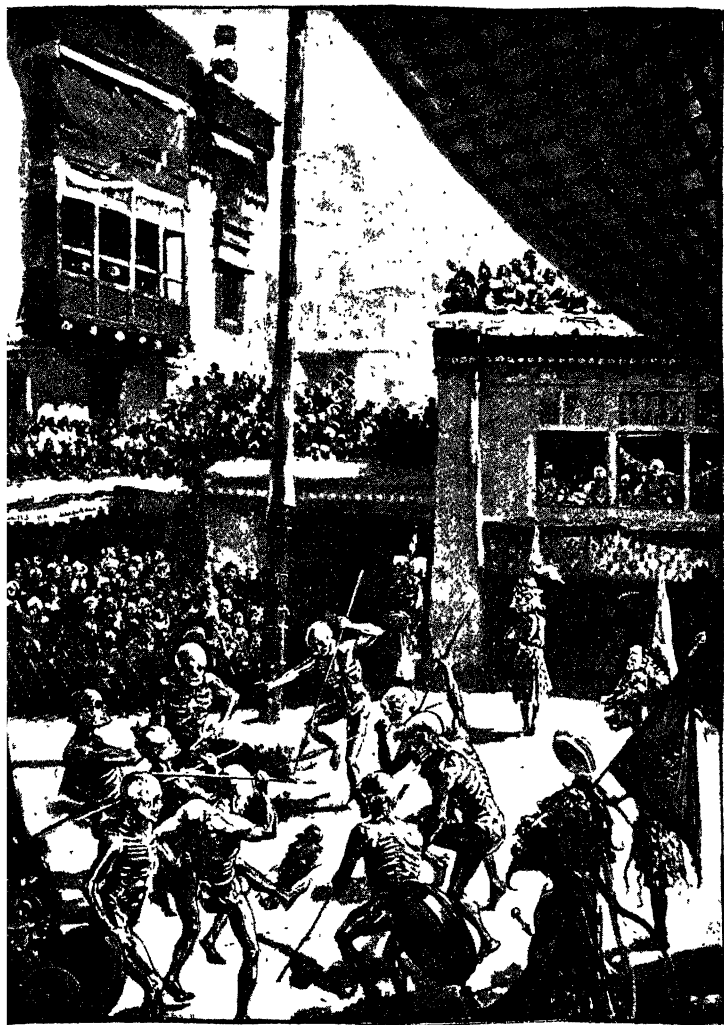
worshipped, as you see, by lamas, kings, spirits, and others." A few minutes later the steward of the gompa came up to us and explained that these were intended for the incarnations of Buddha, and not of the Delai Lama ; whereupon he and that other erudite theologian, the Treasurer, discussed the point at some length in their native tongue. The incident shows how little these people know of the original meaning of their traditional ceremonial.

Throughout the day, even during the above solemn act of worship, certain lamas, masked as comic devils, performed all manner of buffoonery, hitting each other unawares, tripping each other up, and bursting into peals of inane laughter.

Again there came a change. The solemn chanting ceased, and then rushed on the scene a crowd of wan shapes, but with a few dark rags about them, which they sometimes held up by the corners, veiling their faces, and sometimes gathered together round them, as if they were shivering with cold. They wrung their hands despairingly and rushed about in a confused way, as if lost, starting from each other in terror when they met, sometimes feeling about them with their outstretched hands like blind men, and all the while whistling in long-drawn notes, which rose and fell like a strong wind on the hills, producing an indescribably dreary effect.

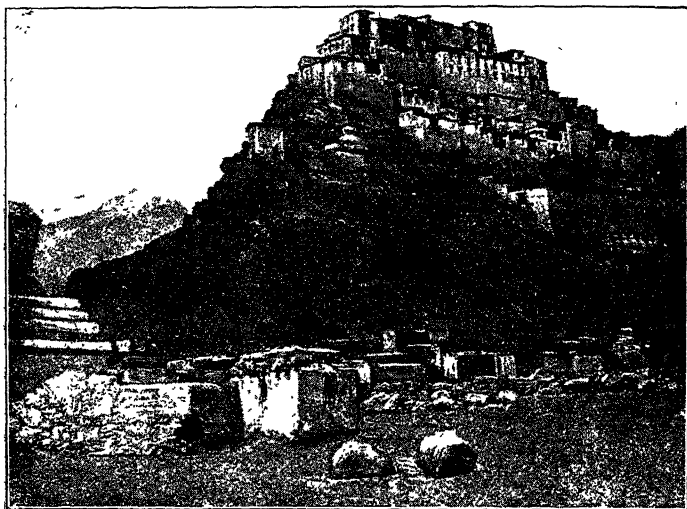
The change from one phase of this curious mummary to another was always startlingly abrupt. One never knew when some peaceful anthem and stately dance of holy figures would be suddenly interrupted by the clashing discord of cymbals and trumpets and the whirling torrent of shrieking fiends.

For a time the Spirits of Evil ruled supreme in the arena. The variously-masked figures flocked in, troop after troop—oxen-headed and serpent-headed devils ; three-eyed monsters with projecting fangs, their heads crowned with tiaras of human skulls ; lamas painted and masked to represent skeletons ; dragon-faced fiends, naked save for tiger-skins about their loins ; and many others. Sometimes they appeared to be taunting and terrifying men who fled hither and thither among their tormentors, waving their arms and wailing miserably. Then the demons were repelled again by holy men.



THE DEVIL DANCE.

At one period of the ceremony a holy man with an archbishop's mitre on his head advanced, to the beautiful chanting of men and boys, the basses, trebles, and tenors, taking successive parts in solo and chorus. This holy man blessed a goblet of water by laying his hands on it and intoning some prayer or charm. Then he sprinkled the water in all directions, and the defeated demons stayed their shrieking, dancing, and infernal music, and gradually



THE LAMASERY OF TIKZAY.

crept out of the arena, and no sound was heard for a time but the sweet singing of the holy choir.

But the power of the exorcism was evanescent, for the routed soon returned in howling shoals, and then lamas and spirits appeared to be contending with rival magic. Strange signs were made and rites performed on either side, all no doubt symbolical, but the meaning of which none could tell me; it was unknown to the people, and to the priests themselves, only the outward forms remaining to them of their ancient creed, the real significance having been long forgotten.

On the following morning, June 17, Bower and Thorold, with their following, left Himis to cross the Chang La—which was visible from here as a gentle dip in the distant white mountain-range—to plunge, a few marches beyond, into the unknown world. I was the last European they were to see until they had crossed mysterious Tibet and had fallen in with the Christian missionaries in China proper.

I returned to Leh with the Naib Wazir and his suite. He suggested that we should cross the Indus by a wooden bridge below Himis, and travel back by the right bank of the river. By taking this route we should pass the large and interesting Gompa of Tikzay. We rode along the white sands of the Indus bed, and encamped not far from the monastery in a delightful bagh of birches and great rose-bushes covered with blossoms, where many wild flowers, too, were in bloom amid the long grass. This garden was surrounded by a sandy desert. In the evening, as is the rule here, a strong wind came up the Indus Valley, and a mist of granite dust obscured the sky and land.

On the following morning we halted at Tikzay on our way to Leh, and paid our salaam to the skooshok. The Monastery of Tikzay is built on the summit of an isolated peak, and is a most picturesque place, with the usual inleaning walls and overhanging, open galleries that characterise the Tibetan architecture.

CHAPTER XIII

BAZAAR RUMOURS—COMMENCE MARCH THROUGH BALTISTAN TO GILGIT
—LINGUA FRANCA—DEFILES OF THE INDUS—GOMA HANU

ON returning to Leh I took up my residence again in the Joint-Commissioner's house. About this time the bazaar was full of rumours of frontier troubles. It was reported that a Russian force had invaded Afghanistan, and that Colonel Durand, our Agent at Gilgit, was fighting the Kanjutis who had raided into Kashmir territory. This and other bazaar tales chilled the courage of my servant Babu Khan. He took it upon himself to recommend me not to march to Gilgit; it was a dangerous road, he said,

to travel, with plenty of bad men on it, who might slay his master ; as for himself he was an old man, and his life was of no value. When the poor old gentleman found that I had no intention of changing my plans, he promptly fell ill, or pretended to do so. There was no doctor in Leh save a kind of Buddhist physician, or magician, who would have treated the case with incantations and charms, so that I had to physic him myself. Despite my care he would not get well, and I was forced to leave him behind at Leh.

The distance from Leh to Gilgit by the road I decided to follow is roughly 370 miles, or thirty-two marches.

This road is a rough one at its best, and a very up-and-down one, varying from 4400 to nearly 17,000 feet above the sea. As the track in many places is not practicable even for unladen animals, I decided to walk all the way. It was an interesting journey, in the course of which I came across some magnificent scenery, and traversed from end to end the province of Baltistan.

As I was leaving Babu Khan behind, my Kashmiri follower, the camera-bearing Subhana, to his great pride and delight, became my factotum, and for the first time in his life was elevated to the rank of khansamah.

My road lay down the Indus Valley for six marches, the first four of which—Leh from Khalsi—I had already traversed on my way from Kashmir. I set out on the morning of June 27 with my little train of coolies, having first bid farewell to weeping Babu Khan and to all my friends, who came outside the town to see me off, leading sheep and goats, and carrying baskets of vegetables for me, as parting gifts.

During these midsummer days I found it much hotter work tramping over the sands and gravel of the Indus bed than it had been on our journey up ; but the oases were lovelier and more refreshing than ever when we reached them after the long desert marches. The roses were now in full blossom, as, too, were many wild flowers familiar to a European eye—vetches, lavender, thyme, bluebells, iris, corn-flowers, delicate columbines, pink or pure white, while convolvulus wreathed trees and bushes with leaves of vivid green and large petals of various hue. At every halting-place the children were sent out to me with bunches

of roses as presents. The apricots, too, had now formed, and were almost of full size in the lower grounds. I watched these with interest, for I looked forward to a great feasting on fruit later on during every hot day's march.

At midday on June 30 we reached Khalsi, and there, leaving the Srinagar road, plunged into what was to me a new country, following the rough cross-country track by

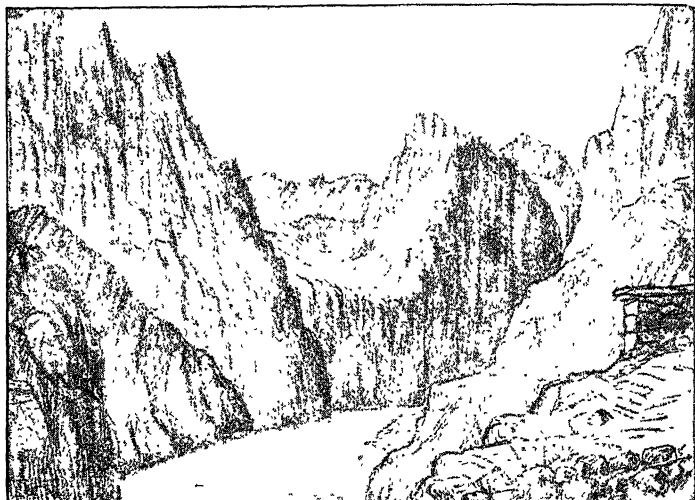


SKIRBICHAN.

which the Balti traders bring down their loads of dried apricots. This day we descended the Indus Valley for some ten miles below Khalsi, and halted for the night at Doomkha.

Now that I had left the Srinagar road I found no rest-houses at the stages, and so here my tent was pitched among the roses and wild flowers under the apricot-trees, close to a little cascade of ice-cold water. On July 1, passing picturesque Skirbichan, with its gompa-crowned rock, we arrived at the point where the Indus gorges commence to become difficult. In order to avoid the terrific precipices the track is carried high over stony mountain-spurs.

On July 2 we descended the Indus gorge through gloomy but magnificent scenery. The stupendous cliffs towered above us on one side of the narrow track, and fell beneath us to the raging torrent on the other side. There was no vegetation, not even a blade of grass to be seen, for a long distance; but at one point of the road we came across a single rose-bush, with one solitary red blossom on it,



GORGES OF THE INDUS.

springing from the débris of a shattered mountain—a strange sight amid the surrounding desolation.

Then we reached the spot beyond which the Indus Valley becomes practically impassable; and it certainly looks it, narrowing to one of the most awful gorges imaginable. It is here that the road leaves the Indus for ten marches, crossing the high mountain-range to the north by the Chorbat Pass, to descend to the banks of the Shayok River, a tributary of the Indus rising under the Karakoram Pass.

On July 3 we proceeded up the ravine to a camping-place

at the foot of the Chorbat La. The embers of old fires under the rocks showed us that this was much used as a halting-ground by the Baltis, of which fact the fleas we picked up here afforded yet another proof. It was a dreary spot, exposed to all the winds of heaven; there were snowy downs all round us, and patches of snow were lying about our camp. It froze hard at night, and there was a strong and biting wind; but we had brought plenty of wood up with us, and the coolies had a roaring fire to sleep by.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CHORBAT LA—THE KARAKORAM RANGE—THE PROVINCE OF
BALTIKISTAN—BALTIIS—A MUSSULMAN COUNTRY—A DEPOSED RAJAH
—KAPALU—ITS RAJAHS—A JOURNEY ON A SKIN RAFT—BRAGAR

WHEN I turned out of my tent at dawn on July 4 I found that it was freezing hard and snowing; but there was no wind.

For the first part of the way up the Chorbat La we marched over undulating downs of snow coated with ice, and consequently fairly easy to walk upon; but for the last 2000 feet or so to the summit of the pass it was very fatiguing travelling, as here we had to ascend a slope of forty-five degrees deeply covered in soft snow.

At this elevation one began to realise that the air was considerably thinner, the atmospheric pressure, as a matter of fact, at 17,000 feet being little more than half what it is at the sea level, and I found that frequent halts were necessary while toiling up this incline; the laden coolies did not reach the summit till three hours after myself. I had my midday halt and tiffin at the extreme top of the pass, which is 16,700 feet above the sea.

The col is formed by a sharp ridge of rock, from either side of which fall the steep snow-slopes. It had now ceased snowing, and the sky was clear, so that from here I could distinguish the details of the immense landscape that was spread before me—leagues on leagues of snow-fields, couloirs of stones and rocky pinnacles, range behind range of great

mountains with glaciers glittering in the hollows of them, the white snow lying wherever the crags were not too steep—a weird and desolate scene, such as one imagines may exist on the Antarctic continent.

Looking to the north across the Shayok Valley, I perceived some stupendous mountains rising above the lesser ranges. These must have been peaks of the main Karakoram range, some fifty miles away, forming the frontier between Baltistan and Chinese Turkestan. I consulted my map, and found that there were several summits exceeding 25,000 feet in the direction I was looking, and one attaining 28,265 feet, the loftiest mountain in the world save Mount Everest. This is K 2, as it is called in the Survey; it is not visible from here, and, indeed, is so buried among huge peaks that it is not at all easy to obtain a glimpse of it from any point, and those who have gazed at it are very few in number.

A glance at a good map enables one to realise what an extraordinary region this is. Glaciers and snowfields are delineated as covering thousands of square miles, the glaciers being far the largest known outside the Arctic regions, filling valleys forty miles in length.

The province of Baltistan, or Little Tibet, into which I was now about to descend, was conquered by the Sikhs in 1840. Before that it was ruled by the Rajah of Skardu and a number of subordinate rajahs, whose descendants still preserve their nominal titles and dignities, and, as is the case with the Gyalpo of Ladak, are held in great respect by their faithful people.

Baltistan, lying between the Himalayas and the ranges of the Hindoo Koosh, the Karakoram, and Tibet, is thus hemmed in on all sides by the highest mountains in the world, and in the winter months, when the passes are closed, it is almost completely isolated. It has, indeed, one natural outlet to the lowlands, the valley of the Indus; but the route afforded by this is far more dangerous to the people than the highest pass, for that portion of the Indus Valley which lies between this country and India is inhabited by Mahomedans of the Suni sect, while the Baltis for the most part are of the Shiah sect. It is one of the pleasant customs of the former to cut the throat of every Shiah who ventures



into their country, while they make slaves of strangers who happen to be of their own creed.

Dwelling in a country almost as barren as Ladak, and being polygamous, the Baltis are far poorer than their well-to-do neighbours. The signs of extreme poverty are, indeed, manifest all over Baltistan, and there is much distress. Rajah Ram Singh, Commander-in-Chief of the Maharajah's forces, recently travelled through Baltistan. On entering the country he was met by a large, doleful crowd of ragged creatures, all wailing, and carrying lit lanterns, though it was broad daylight. The Rajah demanded an explanation. "O Maharajah!" replied the spokesman, "our land is so darkened with suffering that we have brought lanterns, that your Highness may see how it is with us, and relieve us."

The Baltis are of Mongolian stock, somewhat resembling the Ladakis, but have an admixture of Aryan blood, as there is a considerable intermarriage between them and the Astoris, Gilgittis, and others of the so-called Dard race. The Balti men wear skull-caps; the top of the head is shaven, but the long black hair hangs down over either cheek in wild, curling elf-locks. This is distinctly an ugly people; but the women are more comely than those in Ladak, and of fairer complexion. Some of the piquant Balti girls, with their funny little flat faces always wreathed in smiles, their snub noses, and eyes twinkling with fun, can almost be described as pretty, despite their unclassical type of feature, and have, at any rate, the pleasing expression which a cheerful disposition gives. Cheerfulness is the chief characteristic of the long-suffering Balti. He is always ready to laugh. He is the most easily-amused person in the world. At the end of a long day's march along the hot Indus sands, when the wearied coolies are inclined to grumble or sulk, any sort of feeble joke or encouraging remark will send them all stepping out again with cheery good-will. You have only to look in a good temper yourself, and your Balti followers will be contented and amiable under the most depressing circumstances.

After I had taken some photographs at the summit of the pass I commenced the descent. At last we came to where the little Chorbati stream issues from the snow-field,

and we followed it down declivities of débris till we reached our camping-place, an exposed spot in a broad glen, where some grass and alpine flowers grew by the bank of the stream.

It was snowing and cold when camp was broken up on July 5 ; but after abruptly descending for a few hours to lower altitudes, we escaped from a winter morning into a hot summer day. It was late afternoon when, between the crags that rose on either side of us, we opened out the broad sandy valley of the Shayok, backed by great precipices. At the mouth of the ravine we came upon human habitations again for the first time for three days, and entered the village of Chorbat, which was to be our halting-place for the night.

The *kotwal* came out to welcome me, and brought me to a camping-ground among the apricot-trees. The village nestles snugly between the steep mountain-side and the sandy river-bed. I had not been at so low an elevation as this for some time ; so that the crops were far more advanced than any I had yet seen. The barley was already turning yellow, and the mulberries were ripe. I had tasted no fresh fruit for months, and of late no fresh vegetables ; but now I had come to a land of fruit, and during my progress through Baltistan was presented with apricots and mulberries in profusion at every halting-place. Large groves of apricots surround every hamlet in this province, and the dried fruit is the principal export, the *kabani* of Baltistan being famous in all the neighbouring regions.

This was my first Balti village, and that I had crossed the mountains into a country very different from Ladak was at once apparent. All the men and children gathered together to stare politely at the sahib. The men squatted round my tent in a ring, passing the *hookahs* solemnly from one to another ; while the numerous half-naked children played in and out of the circle, laughing, romping, and shrieking after the manner of those of their years all the world over ; but of women not one was to be seen. I was evidently in a Mussulman land again.

The Shayok here appears to be of about the same volume as the Indus where I had left it in Ladak, but is not so

furious a torrent, flowing smoothly for many leagues at a time between its broad white sands. The scenery is finer than in the Ladak valleys, the mountains being of more varied outline, while the oases are more frequent and more extensive.

It was here much hotter than in Ladak, and each day's journey brought us down to a sultrier land, until on the sandy plains of Skardu the temperature was as high as it is in India ; but there was always ice-cold water to drink and fruit to feast on, so I had not much to complain of.

It was late in the afternoon of July 6 when, on arriving at the edge of a high ridge, I looked down upon a most charming landscape. Far beneath was the valley of the Shayok, with its river winding among the sands, and enclosed by snowy ranges. And there at my feet lay an oasis far larger than any I had yet seen. It was an unbroken garden of rich vegetation which bordered the river for several miles, and which was also of considerable breadth, stretching from the river sands across the maidan, and climbing for some way up the lower slopes of the mountains—a succession of orchards of apricot, cherry, walnut, and other fruit-trees ; fields of yellow corn, peas, and lucerne, most grateful to eyes that had been gazing all day on sand and stones glaring in fierce sunshine. This fair spot was Kapalu, the richest district in Baltistan, and regarded as a very Garden of Eden by the Balti people.

My tent was pitched, as usual, in an orchard, and soon some hundreds of villagers assembled, and sat in a respectful semicircle in front of me. A few of these were of the upper class, men of quite fair complexion, and of a very different type from the others ; they had little of the Mongolian in their features, but were something like the modern Greeks, having the same worn refined faces, while the skull-cap, black moustache, and long, black hair made this resemblance still more noticeable.

Subhana came to me and announced that the two small Rajahs of Kapalu were about to call on me ; and soon I perceived, through the fruit-trees, a number of men in white robes approaching. Then all the villagers who were squatting round my tent rose to their feet and respectfully made way for their chiefs. I had been told that the

Rajahs were small, but was not prepared to see quite such juveniles as my two visitors. These were the two orphan sons of the late Rajah of Kapalu, the hereditary rulers of this fertile district, who, like the numerous other rajahs I came across in Baltistan, are treated with as much respect by their people as in the days when their power was absolute.

One of these boys was a fine little fellow of ten, clad in a snow-white robe, and with a huge white turban almost as big as himself on his head. His brother was a baby in arms, similarly attired, and looking an absurd little creature in his topheavy turban; he was brought to me, crowing and laughing, in the arms of a man belonging to the Rajah's retinue, for his female nurse could not, of course, appear in my presence. The baby was then induced to hand to me a doli of ripe cherries, to the intense delight and pride of his nurse and all the onlookers; his own mother could not have displayed greater pleasure than did all these poor people when I expressed my admiration of their infant Rajah's intelligence.

Having tramped the eleven rough marches from Leh on June 21, I had a pleasantly lazy journey for a change by another mode of locomotion. We traversed the orchards that surround the village and descended to the river. The passage of the Shayok is effected on rafts of inflated skins, such as have been in use from time immemorial in the East. We found awaiting us a raft of forty goat-skins supporting a framework of light sticks. To carry my baggage, myself, my servant, the thirteen coolies, and the two officials who were to do me the honour of escorting me for a few marches, necessitated two voyages of the raft and considerable delay. The four men who composed the crew propelled the raft across the broad and rushing river with long poles.

The Shayok here divides itself into numerous channels, flowing between shoals and sandy islets, and is not much encumbered with rocks. It was a little rough when we reached mid-stream, but not dangerously so, and I could see no signs of difficulties lower down; I therefore suggested to the boatmen that they should take me to the next stage on the raft. At first they demurred to doing this, saying that there were rapids ahead, and raising other objections; but by promising them the enormous sum of two rupees

I over-persuaded them, and they agreed to carry me as far as Bragar, a stage and a half below Kapalu. The coolies were accordingly sent off by road with the baggage, to meet at Bragar, while I remained on board, with my servant and the tiffin kiltā, to float down stream. The captain of the vessel explained to me that, being the Government ferryman at Kapalu, and bound to carry across any mails that might arrive—a rare event—it would be unlawful for him to abandon his post ; but that he would get out of this difficulty by dividing his vessel into two portions, one of which he would retain here to serve as mail-boat, while he would despatch me with his crew on the other portion. It did not occupy a minute to break the raft into two bits ; it might have been disjointed into four or forty fragments with equal ease, as it was constructed in this convenient fashion, and each part would have lived upon the water and served as an independent boat.

We kept well in the middle of the river, as a rule, where the stream was strongest ; and as the men had but little control over their vessel with their bladeless poles, she was constantly revolving, which enabled me to admire all the scenery round without turning my head. The goatskins leaked a good deal, as was testified to by the constant bubbling and whistling sounds beneath us ; but the crew stuck manfully to the pumps, or rather to what is the duty equivalent to pumping on a *mussuck* raft, and preserved us from foundering. The legs of the inflated goatskins pass upward between the framework of the raft, and serve as pipes, by which the air is replenished. Our men at intervals blew vigorously down these legs, deftly tied the orifices up again, and thus counteracted the gradual collapsing of the floats.

This was a great change after the dusty road. Being carried down at a rapid rate against the breeze, it struck our faces with the force of a fresh gale. When in the rapids we were whirled across waves of a considerable height, with their tops broken by the wind, so that we were tossed about in most exhilarating fashion, and were often partly under water, shipping seas and being drenched by showers of spray, till I was reminded of the seas and tidal river-mouths, the glories of which these poor inland people knew



RAFT OF INFLATED SKINS, KAPALU.

not of. Subhana, for his part, had no ambition to know more of navigable waters ; he held on tightly to the frail framework of the raft, turned ever paler as we dashed on, and at last experienced the qualms of sea-sickness at an elevation of 9000 feet above the sea.

On either side we saw the sands and rocks quivering in mirage, while columns of sand swept along the hot coast ; but it was pleasantly fresh on our leaping bark. The scenery was ever rapidly changing as we flew by. Now a magnificent rocky cape would jut out from the mountains into the foaming breakers ; now a long, low promontory of green orchards would shut in a bay of still, blue water, forming a charming foreground to the bare hillsides and snowy peaks that rose behind. Here and there I perceived on the cliffs curious little patches of barley or grass, perched high up on apparently inaccessible ledges—on every spot, indeed, where soil could be collected, and to which water could be led.

We beached our vessel for tiffin in a sandy bay on the left bank, close to an orchard of apricots, and halted while our crew thoroughly blew out again the leaky craft. Then we launched her once more, and swept rapidly by Karku, the regulation stage, and entered more boisterous water than we had yet seen, where rocks rose here and there above the foam and had to be carefully avoided. Then the village of Dowani flashed by us ; and at last, just before a point where the river enters a narrow gorge and forms dangerous rapids, into which, had we ventured, shipwreck would have been our probable fate, our boatmen, encouraging each other with shouts, plied their poles, and, directing the raft out of the current, beached her on the sands of the right bank in front of our destination, Bragar.

I paid off and discharged the mariners—who, having broken their vessel up and divided it between them, proceeded to carry the fragments back on their heads by road to Kapalu—and we tramped over the sands and pebbles to the little village, which—arriving in the unexpected fashion we did—we took entirely by surprise. The men stared at us with astonishment as we approached, and the women scampered away to hide themselves.

CHAPTER XV

SKARDU—KATSURAH—THE BANNOK LA—NANGA PARBAT—ON THE
GILGIT ROAD—THE DARDS—ASTOR FORT

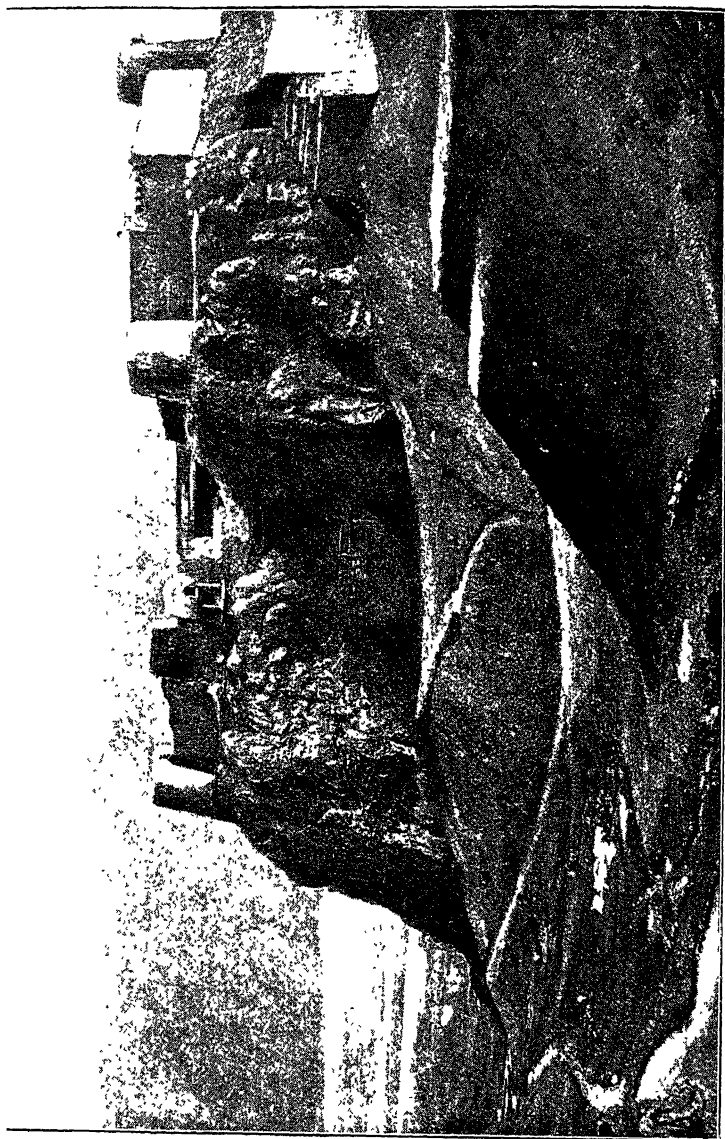
THE journey from Bragar to Skardu occupied us three days. Each march brought us to a lower altitude and to a warmer climate. We had left the barley green in Ladak, but now found the grain all gathered in, while the wild vegetation of the irrigated land was that of a later season, numbers of field-orchids and other summer flowers being in blossom here, instead of the early spring plants we had seen in the highlands.

Near the village of Gol we joined the dak road from Srinagar to Skardu, and saw once more that sign of civilisation, the telegraph-wire, stretching by the side of us.

On July 11 we came to the plain of Skardu. Here the mountains on either side of the Indus retreat, and leave a sandy basin five miles or more in breadth, the bed of an ancient lake, across which the river winds. This plain is 7250 feet above the sea. Skardu itself stands on an alluvial plateau 150 feet above the sandy waste, and is approached by long avenues of poplars. This plateau is well irrigated, and is extensively cultivated. Skardu, though the old capital of all Baltistan, is not an imposing town, consisting of scattered groups of low mud-houses, and possessing a very mean little bazaar. The chief feature is the old fortress, which picturesquely dominates it from a rocky eminence.

The Indus Valley affords the most direct route between Skardu and Gilgit; but the road is perhaps the worst in all Kashmir, and it is often spoken of as being only practicable for experienced cragsmen; the difficulties, however, have been somewhat exaggerated, as I discovered afterwards, when returning to Kashmir by this route.

On leaving Skardu on July 12, I followed an easier road, which, after ascending the Indus Valley for twenty-four miles to the village of Katsurah, crosses the mountains by the Bannok La, a high, snowy pass, and descends on the Gilgit road near the fortress of Astor. In consequence



of bad weather, which delayed us at the foot of the pass, the journey to Astor occupied nine days.

On July 19, after traversing some miles of boulders and patches of hard snow, we descended into a different climate and into a more pleasing country than any I had seen for some time. Pine-woods and flowery pastures covered the hillsides. Little streams rushed down shady dells. There was no lack of water here ; in places reedy swamps filled the valley-bottom, and it was indeed refreshing to see a nice damp morass again, after the arid countries I had left.

This day I enjoyed an experience not easily to be forgotten ; for at last, at a turn in this fair valley, I saw before me, rising above the lower ranges into the cloudless blue sky, a huge white mass, such a mountain as I had never beheld before : not a solitary sharp pinnacle this, but shaped like a hog's back ; a long, rolling height sloping steeply at either end ; a prone Titan. The snowy domes were piled one on the other, and flashing glaciers leagues in length streaked the furrowed sides. This I knew could be no other than the mighty Diyamir, or Nanga Parbat (naked mountain), 26,629 feet in height, which was about twenty miles distant from where I stood. The range of which it is the culminating point forms the frontier of the Maharajah's territories, and also, it may be said, of the known world ; for beyond is the unexplored country of the Chilas tribesmen, into which no stranger may venture. The appearance of the mountain was indeed wonderful, not to be described.

I do not know who is responsible for the present accepted signification of the terms Dard and Dardistan. There are no people who call themselves Dards, and there is no region known as Dardistan to its inhabitants. Dardistan appears to be simply a convenient, but somewhat misleading, name employed by our geographers to express a large tract inhabited by different Aryan races of somewhat similar type. It includes the districts of Astor and Gilgit in the Maharajah's dominions, the little kingdoms of Hunza and Nagar, Yasin, the independent republics of the Indus Valley, and other countries south of the Hindoo Koosh. On the west it is bounded by Kafirstan, to the south by the Pushtoo speaking races, to the east by Kashmir.

The Dards are of Aryan race, a sturdy people, thickly-



NANGA PARBAT.

built, of rather dark complexion, and generally of roughly-hewn and homely features. Drew speaks of them as a people "who are bold, and who, though not caring much for human life, are not bloodthirsty; a people who will meet one on even terms, without sycophancy or fear on the one hand, or impertinent self-assertion on the other." When in happier circumstances than are the unfortunate wretches who live near Astor, the Dards are a cheery people, fond of dance and music. They are braver than their neighbours, and the Hunza-Nagars especially have established a high reputation for valour. The dress of all the Dard men is much the same—woollen pyjamas, woollen choga, or gown, tied in at the waist, and a cloth cap like a long bag, which is rolled up outwards from the bottom till it fits the head tightly.

At last I came to where the nullah debouched upon the broad valley of Astor—not a pleasant green vale like the one I had been descending, but arid and dismal-looking. The Astor, a torrent of some volume, thundered several hundreds of feet beneath me. Beyond it was a hot, bare, dusty slope, with clumps of bluish wormwood scattered over it, and I saw extending up and down the valley along this slope what, from where I stood, appeared to be a mere irregular scratch on the dry earth—and I knew that I was looking at the dreary road of slavery, the hated track to Gilgit, of which I had heard so much; and even as I looked I perceived a long string of ragged men, bending under sacks of grain, toiling slowly down the valley, through the cloud of dust they raised, to the north.

A mile or so up the valley, on the farther bank of the torrent, stood the fortress of Astor, with its towered walls crowning an eminence, steep cliffs falling away from it on three sides. I crossed the river by a wooden bridge, ascended the cliff by a rough path, passed through the outer walls, and found myself among barracks and narrow streets of mud huts. These were crowded with Kashmir sepoy, begari coolies, trains of mules, and dingy camp-followers.

CHAPTER XVI

THE NEW MILITARY ROAD—MARCH TO GILGIT—GILGIT AND ITS OASIS—
DISQUIETING RUMOURS—RETURN TO SRINAGAR—BORZIL PASS

THE strategical road which Messrs Spedding & Co. were then constructing between Srinagar and Gilgit will greatly facilitate the transport, and render the oppressive begar unnecessary. It is notorious, as I have before said, that numbers of the unfortunate coolies who are every year torn from their homes in different parts of the State to carry loads on the old road never return, but perish of cold or starvation by the wayside. Most important from an Imperial point of view, the new road will also confer a great boon on the country by doing away with this cruel system; an organised transport corps is being established, and beasts of burden will now take the place of the wretched peasants.

The road from Astor to Gilgit is divided into nine marches, which I got over in six days.

I had heard so much of the desolation of the Gilgit district that I was much surprised to find it surrounded by one of the largest and best-cultivated oasis I had beheld since leaving fertile Kapalu. The mountains here recede from the river, leaving on the right bank a broad plain, well watered by little streams. I walked through orchards of ripe peaches, under clusters of purple grapes, across fields of rice, millet, maize, and Indian hemp, past the Dogra fort and barracks, and reached the British Agency—a further surprise for me; for here I came upon signs of civilisation I had not anticipated, a pretty bungalow standing in the middle of well-kept grounds and gardens. Here I found four of the officers of Colonel Durand's staff, by whom I was made welcome.

On this occasion I stayed at Gilgit for three days, and was enabled to form some idea of the excellent work this handful of British officers had already accomplished in putting this, the extreme outpost of the Empire, in a proper state of defence.

I saw that the work of these officers was no sinecure. Little time had they to go shikaring into the well-stocked

nullahs of the neighbourhood. While they were drilling the garrison into shape and superintending the grain transport at Gilgit, Captain Twigg was doing the same work at Astor ; and Colonel Neville Chamberlain was contending with the most anxious task of all, that of hurrying all necessaries across the Borzil Pass before it should be closed for the winter.

There were but thirty men of our own Indian Army at Gilgit when I was there, fine Pathans of the 20th Punjab Infantry, who formed the bodyguard of the British Agent in this remote corner of the world.

Surgeon Roberts, the Agency doctor, whose share of the hard work was not to come till later on, had time to ride about the country with me and show me the sights. On the evening of my arrival we went to the mouth of the Kargha nullah, up which there is a track leading into Yaghistan, to see a carving of Buddha on the face of a rock, a sign that this country, as well as Baltistan, had once been Buddhist.

At this time various disquieting rumours came to Gilgit. It was reported that a body of Cossacks was on the Pamirs at a point only ten marches distant, and would probably enter the Hunza Valley, where the rulers, while hostile to us, were favourably disposed to the Russians. Then we heard that Captain Younghusband had promptly left Kashgar for the Pamirs, to discover what was going on.

Four Hunza notables, accompanied by some eight or nine followers, entered Gilgit while I was there, bringing some message from their king. These specimens of the robber tribe were strongly-built men, with bold eyes and rather jovial expressions. They all wore the Dard caps and cloth chogas, or robes, some of the chogas being thickly studded with little white feathers to add to their warmth. Their long black hair hung in knotted ringlets on either cheek. They were most diplomatic in their talk, and prated of the blessings of peace, which, with these people, is generally a sign of warlike intention.

I now decided to travel the twenty-two stages to Srinagar, replenish my kit, and await events there. The traffic on the road was becoming denser every day, as the long trains of men and beasts of burden were bringing up the anxiously-

expected grain. On bad parts of the road, and especially on the terrible Hattu Pir, we frequently passed the bodies or bones of horses and mules that had fallen by the way, to feed the vultures. I crossed the Hattu Pir this time by the upper road, 6000 feet of hard climbing through the suffocating air.

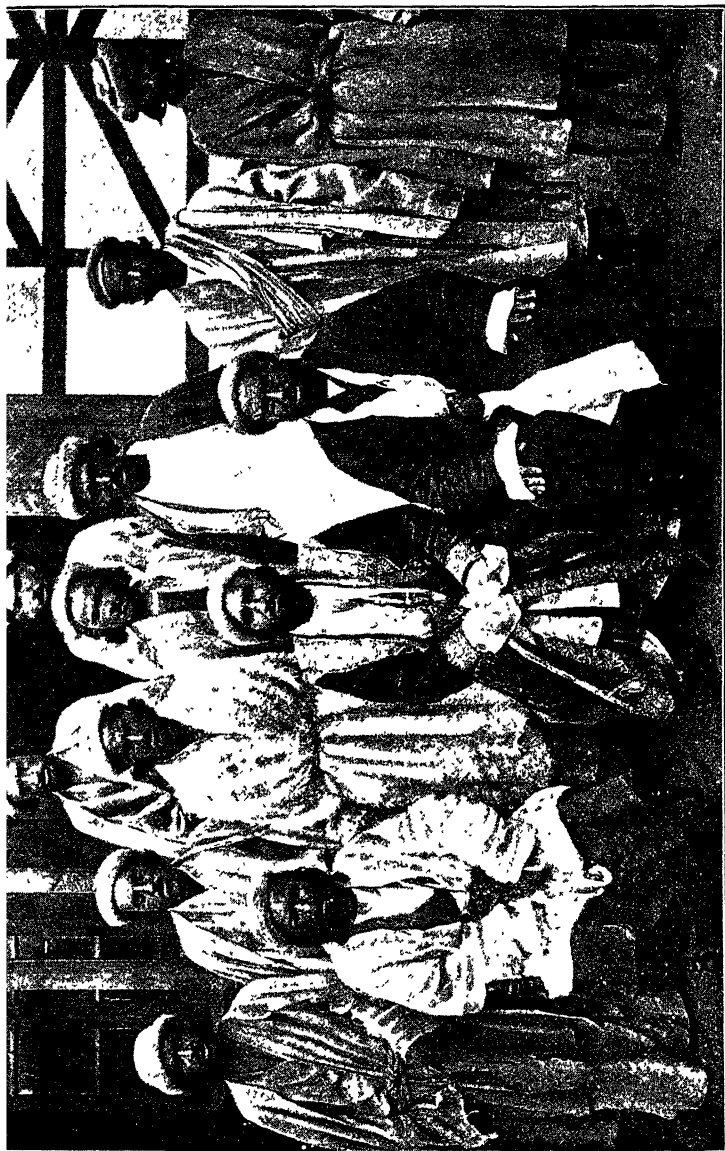
The Borzil Pass brought me over the same great Western Himalayan range which I had crossed farther east, in the spring, by the Zoji La. As I have before explained, this range forms the barrier between the moister and more fertile plains and valleys of Kashmir proper and the almost rainless and arid regions of Ladak, Baltistan, and Astor. No sooner did I cross the Borzil than I perceived, even as I had done on the Zoji La, though not here to so marked a degree, that I was entering a different climate, where the air was soft and the vegetation luxuriant—a land of woods and pastures and continued cultivation, instead of deserts and scattered oases as heretofore.

Even this, my first march beyond the pass, brought me into a delicious country, such as I had not seen for many months, where all the hillsides were covered with deep grass full of flowers—the beautiful mergs of Kashmir.

Fertile as was all the country to Bandipur, it was far more difficult to obtain supplies here than on the most desert portions of the Gilgit road. Had I not made provision, I might have almost starved in the rich valleys of the Borzil and Kishanganga rivers, and I should have fared but badly had it not been for the camps of the road-making engineers I passed on the way.

There were numbers of Pathans at work on this portion of the road, who, as elsewhere, were being kept well in hand by the engineers, the only men they will obey. But it must be remembered that the Company selects its officers with care, and the pluck and tact with which these half a dozen young Englishmen control these thousands of undisciplined men affords a good example of the way our race has gone to work to create an empire.

Shortly before I arrived at Minemerg a really serious disturbance had seemed imminent. Navvies coming from different villages in Afghanistan had quarrelled over the distribution of some grain. They proposed to settle the



HUNZA ENVOYS.

question by fighting it out on the maidan of Minemerg with picks and crowbars, so many hundred men on either side. This would no doubt have been a most bloody and Homeric conflict, had not the engineer stepped in and prevented it.

CHAPTER XVII

THE RAJDIANGAN PASS—VIEW OF THE VALE OF KASHMIR—SRINAGAR AGAIN—WAR RUMOURS—REINFORCEMENTS FOR GILGIT—RETURN TO ASTOR—AN EARLY WINTER—CLOSING OF THE PASSES—LOSS OF LIFE ON THE PASSES—CAPTAIN YOUNGHUSBAND—ARRIVAL OF THE GUNS AND 5TH GURKHAS

ON September 6 our march was through a country which, save for the mountainousness of it, might have been a richly-timbered park in England. Leaving the Kishanganga Valley, we ascended a tributary nullah to the dak hut of Zadkusa, the camping-place at the foot of the Rajdiangan Pass. The snows of the preceding winter were still lying piled up by the torrent, and there were frequent signs of the destructive avalanches which render this portion of the Gilgit road dangerous in the spring.

On September 7 we crossed the Rajdiangan Pass, which, though only 11,800 feet above the sea, is even more dreaded than the Borzil in the winter months.

The wonderful view that is obtained from this point has been described by many travellers. The whole Vale of Kashmir is spread beneath one like a map—a scene strangely stirring, for its immensity and freedom, to one who comes suddenly upon it, after travelling for months among the imprisoning gorges to the northward. From the camp the mountains fall steeply to the fertile plain, 4000 feet below. Far away, hanging above the vague horizon of the plain, and separated from it by blue mists, lay what seemed to be a lone cloud, fringed with white at the top—the snow-capped mountain-ranges that divide Kashmir from India.

The view at night was of magical beauty: the lake and the far snows gleamed in the moonlight; the plain stretched out, dim and blue, as if into infinite space. From this height it almost seemed as if I were gazing down upon some

other world ; and there was nothing to show that it was an inhabited plain beneath me save the scattered, flickering points of red light from the fires of travellers' camps or peasant farms.

September 8 was my last day's march for the present. After descending the mountain into the hot plain I walked along a broad high-road through the richly-cultivated land, by farmhouses with gabled, thatched roofs like Norman cottages, everything looking strangely civilised after the northern country, with its rough tracks, scanty vegetation, and wretched hovels. The scenery, too, was no longer alpine and contracted, but of gentle outlines and far horizons. On one side of me the Woolar Lake spread out like a great sea, while on the other side were low, wooded hills, which often projected in long promontories—purple in the distance—far out into the smooth, blue water.

Near the large village of Bandipur we selected one of the numerous passenger-doongahs that were brought up alongside the bank, got the baggage on board, laid up provisions for the journey—not omitting the delicious water-melons, which are abundant in Kashmir at this season and are responsible for a good deal of sickness—and then we were poled, paddled, and towed to Srinagar, a voyage which occupied twenty-four hours.

I found the Chenar Bagh crowded with tents ; for Srinagar was now full, the European society having returned from the summer station of Gulmarg. I did not remain in the bachelors' camping-place, but took up my residence in Spedding's capacious house-boat in the Munshi Bagh, where I found Mr Beech and Mr Lennard, who had returned from their travels in Central Asia, the latter not having been murdered by Kanjuti robbers, as had been reported.

Here I awaited the news that would determine my movements. Various rumours were about : the Russians were on the Pamirs : Cossacks had arrested British officers on neutral territory ; the Hunzas were preparing to attack Gilgit, and an expedition against them was probable. But so far there was nothing certain known. At Srinagar people were making preparations to receive the Viceroy, who was to visit Kashmir in a few weeks.

All this while the grain was being hurried over the passes to Gilgit, and the resources of the officials were being taxed to the utmost to get it across before the first heavy snowfall. Colonel Neville Chamberlain was unceasingly at work. Had it not been for his energy and supervision, there would have been famine among the frontier garrisons that winter.

At last paragraphs in the Indian papers announced that several officers were repairing to Gilgit, and that the garrison there was to be reinforced by 200 men of the 5th Gurkha regiment from Abbotabad, and two guns of the No. 4 Hazara Mountain Battery. Seeing how difficult it was to send up a sufficient supply of grain for the existing garrison, it was obvious that such a force would not be despatched to Gilgit at so late a season unless a winter campaign were anticipated. I therefore decided to postpone my return to England and to re-cross the passes, though to do so would possibly involve my being locked in by the snow until the following spring.

Having obtained the necessary permission, I set out on September 22 to retrace my steps along the twenty-two marches of the Gilgit road. After a last dinner with Lennard on the house-boat, I set out for Bandipur at midnight in my doongah. We glided gently through the water-streets of the city by palaces, temples, and houses looming indistinctly in the darkness, a few lights glimmering here and there from lattices above or from the watchmen's lanterns in the narrow streets. At one corner we passed a garden hung with coloured lamps, in which people were holding revelry to the music of tomtoms and mandolines; but elsewhere there was no sound to be heard, save the splashing of our boatmen's paddles—a strangely still and peaceable departure this, through the sleeping capital, for the bloodshed and battle-din of the northern frontier.

On the bleak top of Rajdiangan I began to realise that summer was done. We passed through freezing mists, and encountered a slight snowstorm, accompanied by a most biting wind. On reaching the forests on the farther side of the pass I saw that the foliage, which I had left green a few days back, was now red and yellow, and that the leaves were falling fast. The weather remained fine during our journey to Astor: each day there was a blue sky overhead;

but each night it froze, and each morning I woke to find the ground covered with hoar frost. There were but a few inches of snow on the Borzil Pass, and we effected the passage without difficulty.

I reached the bagh of Idgarh, by Astor, on October 1, and there found Lieutenant Manners Smith and others of the Gilgit staff hard at work, as, too, was Blaker, of Spedding's staff, who had nearly completed this section of the road.

On October 13, Colonel Durand, Captain Colin Mackenzie, of the Seaforth Highlanders, and Captain Aylmer, R.E.—two of the officers who had been sent to Gilgit in view of the threatened disturbances—and Mr Lennard, arrived at Idgarh. They had experienced rough weather on the Borzil, had lost a horse, while one of their followers had been badly frostbitten. On the summit of the pass they had come across a poor woman searching distractedly for the frozen body of her child, herself on the point of death. They put her on a horse and brought her down to the first rest-house, where they found her particularly brutal husband, a Kashmiri contractor, I believe, who had hurried off to the refuge leaving her to die, when the storm had overtaken his party. He expressed some regret at the loss of his child, but when his conduct was being strongly commented upon by the Englishmen, he excused himself by saying, "It was wrong of me to forget the child; but as for the zanana, she is of little account, being but an old woman."

We learnt that the Gurkhas were not expected at Bandipur until the 14th, and would be accompanied by 1200 transport mules and 400 drivers. They would have arrived at Astor before this had it not been for cholera, which had broken out during the march from Abbotabad, killing sixteen men; so that a long halt had to be made before the force could enter Kashmir.

On October 21 we were again put in touch with the outer world, and reassured as to the safety of some more of our friends; for on this day Spedding, Beech, and Mitchell arrived in camp from the south. The Borzil had already commenced to levy its annual tribute of life, for they had seen several men and many horses lying dead in the snow on the pass, and the number of victims was increasing daily.

On October 24 we had visitors from the other direction. Captain Younghusband and Lieutenant Davison arrived from Gilgit, on their way to India. They had crossed the Pamirs.

At last we heard tidings of the expected force. It had



SEPOYS OF THE FIFTH GURKHA REGIMENT.

arrived at Bandipur, and was coming up in three detachments.

While waiting for orders at Idgarh camp I employed most of my time in playing at golf, with Beech and others, on the polo-ground. We taught the fine old Rajah of Astor this game, and it was funny to hear the flattering exclamations of his subservient followers on every occasion that the

aged chief distinguished himself. The Rajah was very well disposed to us. His backbone, as he put it, had been broken by the recent murder of his son-in-law by the King of Hunza, and seeing the signs of warlike preparation around him, he was in hopes that we were about to wreak vengeance on the cruel tyrant of the robber valley.

CHAPTER XVIII

DESCRIPTION OF HUNZA-NAGAR—DEFENCES OF THE VALLEY—KANJUT
RAIDS ON CARAVANS—SLAVE-DEALING—THE THUMS—CAUSES OF
COLONEL DURAND'S EXPEDITION—OUR ULTIMATUM—FORMER
KANJUT VICTORIES—SPEDDING'S SAPPER AND MINER CORPS

THE allied States of Hunza and Nagar, as will be seen on reference to the map, comprise the valleys draining into the upper portion of the Kanjut, or Hunza River, which flows into the Gilgit River two miles below Gilgit Fort. This region is extremely difficult of access, to which fact is due the impunity with which the tribesmen have hitherto been able to carry on their raids into the countries of their neighbours. These valleys are buried in a gigantic mountain system containing some of the highest peaks in the Himalayas, Mount Rakaposhi, which towers above Chalt, being 25,560 feet above the sea-level, while several other summits exceed 24,000 feet. Immense glaciers descend into the ravines, the Nagar River itself rising in the vastest of known glaciers, covering hundreds of square miles.

Surrounded thus by granite precipices and huge wastes of ice and snow, affording only a hazardous passage during a few summer months into the neighbouring countries, Hunza-Nagar has but one vulnerable point on the southern side of the Hindoo Koosh, the ravine of the Kanjut River ; while the junction of that torrent with the Gilgit River is the one gateway of the country assailable for an invading force. Even this entrance is practically closed during the summer months ; for then the river, swollen by the melting snows, becomes an unfordable and raging torrent, overflowing the whole bottom of the valley at many points, so that the only way left by which one can ascend the

gorge is a rough track high upon the cliff-side, carried along narrow ledges, and overhanging frightful precipices—a road fit only for goats and cragsmen, which could be easily held by a handful of determined men against a large force; while at this season the river can only be crossed by means of frail twig-rope bridges, which will support but two or three men, and can be cut adrift with a knife in a few moments.

After ascending the Hunza Valley for thirty miles from its junction with the Gilgit Valley, the fort of Chalt is reached, the farthest outpost of the Kashmir State in that direction. Thirty miles above Chalt are the villages of Hunza and Nagar, the first on the right, the second on the left bank of the river, almost facing each other, the respective capitals of these two little robber States, which, despite all the trouble they have caused, can turn out between them not many more than 5000 fighting-men. In name they were tributary to Kashmir, the King of Hunza paying a yearly tribute of twenty ounces of gold-dust, two horses and two hounds, the King of Nagar a certain quantity of gold-dust and two baskets of apricots. Till now both States have been practically independent; for though the Kashmir Durbar made repeated efforts to reduce them to submission, these proved entirely unsuccessful, and only resulted in puffing up the Hunza-Nagaris with an implicit confidence in their power and prowess, and encouraging their insolent aggressiveness. On several occasions the tribesmen have repulsed the regiments of the Maharajah and attempted to invest Gilgit; and in 1888 they captured Chalt Fort, and were not driven out again without considerable difficulty.

These Hunza-Nagaris, generally known to their neighbours as the Kanjutis, though this name strictly applies to the Hunzas alone, have for centuries been the terror of all the people between Afghanistan and Yarkand. Inhabiting these scarcely accessible defiles, they have been in the habit of making frequent raids across the Hindoo Koosh and earning their livelihood by a well-organised brigandage; the thums, or kings of these two little States deriving the greater portion of their revenue from this source. So great was the dread inspired by these robbers,

that large districts have been abandoned by their inhabitants, and land formerly cultivated has lapsed into wilderness, under the perpetual menace of the Kanjut raids. The most profitable hunting-ground of the Kanjutis was the great trade-route between Leh and Yarkand over the Karakoram Pass, and many a rich caravan on its way from India to Central Asia has been waylaid and pillaged in the neighbourhood of Shadulah. The thums used to maintain their regular agents at Yarkand, who gave them notice of an expected caravan. On one memorable occasion a caravan of fifty laden camels and 500 laden ponies was captured. The Kashmiris and the Chinese found themselves powerless to put a stop to these raids, and the Kanjutis acquired a great prestige, and were considered as quite invincible. The Hunzas, indeed, had never yet known defeat.

But this wholesale brigandage, bad as it was, was only a minor offence when put by the side of the systematised slave-dealing in which these scourges of the frontier have been engaged from time immemorial. All prisoners of any commercial value—men, women, and children—captured in these raids were driven across the mountains, to be sold, either directly to the slave-owners in Chinese Turkestan, or to Kirghiz dealers, who served as middlemen in this trade.

The rulers of these two States were, as might be expected, ignorant and bloodthirsty scoundrels, faithless to their treaty obligations, and incapable of respecting anything but force. They were absolute monarchs, and murdered or sold their subjects into captivity at their own sweet will. The royal families of Hunza and Nagar are descended from two brothers who lived in the fifteenth century, but they trace their ancestry further back, to a divine origin. The Thum of Hunza, whom we were now about to depose, boasted of being descended from Alexander the Great—a common claim hereabouts—and a fairy of the Hindoo Koosh; certainly a very respectable pedigree. It is said that it was a point of etiquette in his savage Court, on certain occasions, for a Wazir to ask in the thum's presence, "Who is the greatest king of the East?" and for another flatterer to reply, "Surely the Thum of Hunza;

unless, perhaps, it be the Khan of China ; for these without doubt are the two greatest." This monarch had a very high opinion of his own importance. When asked by Captain Younghusband why he did not visit India, he replied haughtily, " It is not customary for great kings like



A HUNZA RAJAH AND TRIBESMEN.

myself and my ancestor Alexander to leave their own dominions." Later on, however, he did undertake a journey to foreign lands ; for after his stronghold had been stormed, he took to his heels and fled to China, with a somewhat undignified speed for so great a prince.

The Hunzas and Nagars cordially hate each other. They are of the same type of the Dard race, but the Hunzas have the greater reputation for courage. The Nagars

are of the Shiah sect, and do not drink wine ; whereas the Hunzas are of that curious sect known as the Maulai, and are abhorred as Kafirs by stricter Mahomedans for their wine-bibbing propensities and their generally irreligious way of living. The Hunzas, indeed, appear to be entirely free from any Mussulman prejudices. The Aga Khan, of Bombay, is the present spiritual head of the Maulais.

About half a dozen Europeans only had thus far visited the Kanjut Valley—Colonel Lockhart ; Colonel Durand, in 1889 ; Captain Gromschevsky ; and, last of all, Captain Younghusband ; so that there was a great fascination in the idea that we were about to explore the robber fastnesses.

The immediate causes of the expedition may be summarised as follows :—

In 1889 the Hunza-Nagar chiefs entered into a treaty with Colonel Durand. They undertook to put an end to the raiding on the Yarkand road, and promised to allow properly accredited British officers to travel through their territories when necessary. On the other hand, the Government of India agreed to grant small yearly allowances to both thums. It was not long before the thums broke their engagements, and the old disturbances commenced afresh. The Thum of Hurza told Captain Younghusband that unless a larger subsidy was allowed him he would resume his caravan raids, as that was his legitimate source of income ; later on, at a critical time, he would not allow letters to be carried through his territories to Captain Younghusband, then on the Pamirs.

In May 1891, Rajah Uzr Khan murdered his two brothers, partly because he was jealous of their friendship with the British, and wrote an insolent letter to Colonel Durand announcing what he had done. News was brought to Gilgit that the Kanjut raids had recommenced, and that people had been kidnapped near Chalt and sold into slavery. At last this defiant attitude was changed for active hostilities, and in the middle of May, as I had heard in Ladak, the Hunza and Nagar chiefs gathered their fighting men and marched upon Chalt with the intention of capturing that fortress. Colonel Durand, having had timely information of the intention of the tribesmen, made a forced march to Chalt with only 200 of his men and one

British officer, and reinforced the garrison. The tribesmen, disconcerted by this prompt step, after some hostile demonstrations, having exhausted their supplies, withdrew to their own country.

Considering the provocation the tribesmen had given, the terms that were now to be offered to them were exceedingly lenient. The Indian Government was ready to condone previous offences, and Colonel Durand was instructed to take no punitive action unless it was forced upon him by further misbehaviour. But, at the same time, no more nonsense on the part of these turbulent petty monarchs was to be tolerated; and, in order to insure the safety of our garrisons for the future, a new fort was to be erected at Chalt, while a military road, practicable for mules, would be made from Gilgit to Hunza and Nagar—or beyond, should this be deemed necessary for the defence of the Hindoo Koosh passes. These roads were to be taken in hand at once, and should the thums offer any opposition, our troops would enter their country and the roads would be made in spite of them. Such were, practically, the terms of Colonel Durand's ultimatum.

As soon as Spedding was informed that an expedition into the Kanjut Valley had been decided upon, he volunteered to withdraw a number of his men from the Gilgit road work and place them, together with some of his staff, at the disposal of Colonel Durand as a sapper and miner corps. His offer was gladly accepted.

CHAPTER XIX

A HUNZA SPY CAUGHT—THE ENEMY'S PLANS—COLONEL DURAND'S FORCE—THE KANJUT VALLEY—NOMAL—THE CHAICHAR PARI—OUR TROOPS REACH CHALT—THE REPLY TO COLONEL DURAND'S ULTIMATUM—OUR FORCE CROSSES THE FRONTIER

ON November 14, Beech and myself set out for Gilgit with our limited baggage. As we rode off, Spedding's Indian khansamah, who was left behind to guard our property, wished us good-luck, and smilingly said, "I

will have a very good tiffin ready for you when you return from the wars." But the Kashmiris shook their heads sadly ; I do not think they expected to see us again. We reached Gilgit in two days.

At Gilgit we learnt the latest news from Colonel Durand. A Hunza spy had been captured. He confessed that he had been sent to discover with what force we were holding a very strong position known as the Chaichar Parî, on the road between Gilgit and Chalt, a night attack on which was contemplated by the Hunzas. This position commands the road at a point where it is but a narrow ledge along the face of dangerous precipices, and so perpendicular are the cliffs falling away from it on all sides, that a small force holding this natural fortress with resolution, could not be dislodged without considerable difficulty and loss of life. Once before the Kanjuts seized this position, and, by thus isolating it, captured Chalt. The spy also revealed another scheme of the tribesmen, by which they hoped to surprise Chalt. A number of men concealing their arms about their persons and carrying loads on their backs, so that they might be taken for coolies from Gilgit, were to march up to the unsuspecting sepoy, and fall upon them when they had gained admittance within the fort. Seeing that the Kanjuts in dress and appearance are exactly like Astoris and Gilgittis, it is not impossible that they would have successfully carried out this ingenious plan.

Colonel Durand had, however, taken measures to anticipate the tribesmen, and the intended surprises were not attempted. Chalt had been reinforced, and British officers had been sent there ; the Chaichar Pari was well guarded, while posts were established at other points between Gilgit and Chalt. We had signal stations on conspicuous hills, and Gilgit was kept in constant communication with the farthest outposts by the flag-waggers. On the evening of our arrival, the signal came that armed tribesmen had been rolling down rocks on the road near Nomal, from the mountains above.

On the following morning, November 16, we were awakened by martial music, and on turning out saw 100 men of the 5th Gurkhas, under Lieutenant Boisragon—on whom the command of this detachment had devolved,

and the two 7-pound guns, under Lieutenant Gorton, setting out for Nomal, followed by a long string of Balti coolies carrying the baggage. They crossed the Gilgit River by a temporary winter causeway which Captain Aylmer had constructed—a series of stone islands connected by planks.

On this afternoon, while I was walking with Lieutenant Molony, a very brown and weather-stained Englishman rode up, whom my companion at once recognised and greeted. This was Surgeon-Major Robertson, who for the last fifteen months had been exploring Kafiristan, and whose travels and strange adventures in that mysterious region will prove deeply interesting, if published to the world. He had but that moment come in, and had brought six Kafirs with him, who much astonished the people of these parts by their outlandish habits and Pagan rites.

This same day Spedding's 200 Pathans arrived, swaggering up in a body, shouldering their picks, shovels, and jumpers, and carrying five days' rations of rice, under Appleford, M'Culloch, and Maynard, having tramped from Boonji in two days. These tall, wiry Afghans marched in with a springy stride, looking very business-like, in splendid training after their many months' heavy work on the road. They had procured a tomtom somewhere, which one of their number beat at their head.

The total force under Colonel Durand amounted to about 2000 men; but with these he had to garrison Gilgit, Boonji, Astor, and hold all the posts on our long line of communication, which for many marches, as I have explained, was exposed to the attacks of the Shinaka tribes and had to be well guarded. Consequently, only 1000 men could be spared for operations beyond Chalt.

The weather was now perfect here, mellow and with unclouded skies—a true St Martin's summer. We congratulated ourselves on our luck in this respect.

Now that all the assailable positions between Gilgit and our farther outposts up the Kanjut Valley were well guarded by our men, it was necessary, before Colonel Durand could advance with the remainder of his force, that a comparatively easy line of communication should



ENCAMPMENT OF SPEDDING'S PATHANS.

be established between Gilgit and Chalt. Spedding was accordingly sent forward to construct a rough temporary road, practicable for mules, with the utmost expedition, while Captain Aylmer would find little difficulty in constructing temporary bridges across the shrunken stream.

So, on November 17, the Pathan coolies were taken down to the fort, and arms were distributed among them—Sniders and Enfield muzzle-loaders. They also got hold of a lot of old accoutrements and helped themselves, each man buckling about himself as many belts and pouches as he could lay hands on. It was amusing to observe the childish pride and excitement of these men as they marched off thus equipped, presenting a wild and ragamuffin, though also formidable, appearance. Beech and myself, having witnessed the above strange scene in the fort, set out on foot together for Pilche, the first camping-place in the Kanjut Valley.

We crossed to the farther bank of the Gilgit River by the rope bridge. This, like the other bridges in this region, is formed of three stout ropes of plaited birch twigs, one serving as a foot-rope, the other two as hand ropes, slighter guy-ropes of the same material connecting the former with the latter. A rope bridge cannot be stretched taut without breaking ; so it is always slung slackly, forming a deep curve. Many men who have excellent heads on a hillside are nervous on a rope bridge, swinging dizzily as it does to every breeze, high over the foaming torrent. But no one accustomed to going aloft at sea finds any difficulty on one of these ; whereas many a seaman would feel uncomfortable when crawling along some of the so-called roads of this country.

After following the left bank of the Gilgit River for about two miles, we came to the jaws of the Kanjut defile, and found ourselves amid scenery still more wild and desolate than that of the Gilgit Valley. Ruddy cliffs rose on either side of us to a great height ; the bottom of the ravine was fairly broad, sandy, and strewn with boulders, producing no vegetation save scattered alkaline and desert herbs. The Kanjut River rushed by us in dark discoloured waves, breaking into white foam.

There was something peculiarly dreary in this gateway of the robber country. There were no signs of life ; this, indeed, bore the appearance of a debatable land, the scene of frequent border forays, where no man dares cultivate the soil, knowing not who may reap what he has sown. It is thus all the way to Chalt, except round the fort-protected village of Nomal, and some time since the entire population of that place was surprised and carried away into captivity. At frequent intervals on the road we saw ruined *sangas*, or stone breastworks, and other defences, showing that we were in a country that had seen much fighting and had never known security. We overtook our servants and baggage-coolies and reached our destination long after dark. We found no habitations at Pilche, which is merely a camping-place where dwarf tamarisks supply a little fuel. Here we bivouacked on the sand for the night, as did M'Culloch, Maynard, and the Pathans, who came in some hours after us.

The next day we all marched off together to Nomal, up to which point the road was good, having been much improved by Colonel Durand's sappers in the spring.

We found the river sands hereabouts to be full of small garnets and iron pyrites ; while in several places the earth was yellow with sulphur. The soldiers hereabouts manufacture their own powder, as the soil of the valley contains saltpetre as well as sulphur ; but they have to depend on the outside world for the lead of which to make their bullets. The Hunza River is famous for its gold-washings ; and the villagers, even with their rude appliances, extract quantities of the precious metal from the river sands.

At Nomal we found a good deal of cultivation and a Dogra mud fort, on whose battlements were some *sher bachas* (little tigers), cannon of local manufacture.

Spedding and Appleford here joined us, and the road-making was vigorously conducted at the first *pari* behind Nomal. A *pari* is a projecting spur of the mountain falling sheer into the river. Between the *paris* it was possible, as a rule, to carry this winter road along the dry margin of the torrent bed ; but at a *pari*—often a perpendicular wall of very hard rock—much blasting and gallery work was necessary before the roughest mule track could be made.

The old road as usual avoided these obstacles by climbing high over the cliffs by steep scaffoldings, impassable for mules and even difficult for men. The first spot at which the road-makers had to work was very cheerless and chilly; the cliffs rose to a great height on either side, shutting out the sun's rays for all but half an hour or so at midday.

The desolation of the frontier ravine was more remarkable as we advanced; there was no vegetation, there were no inhabitants, the only life being that we brought with us in our preparations for war—the sepoys, the road-makers, and the transport coolies; while the challenges of sentries, and the booming of the blasting on the road were the most familiar sounds at this time.

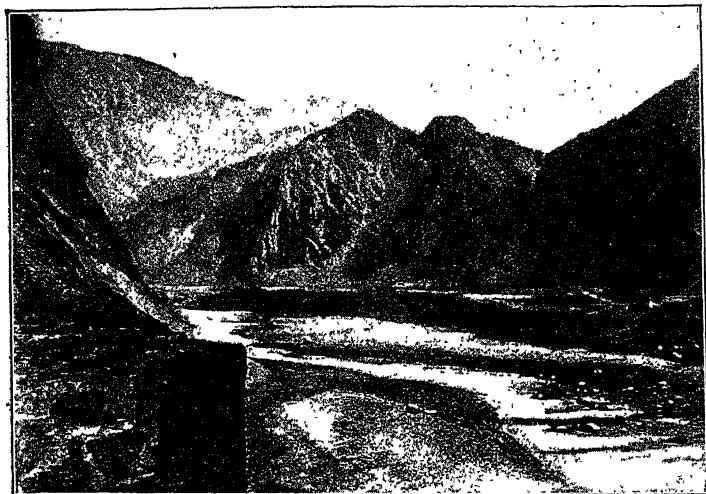
On November 23 we saw a Hunza envoy accompanied by a guard of Kashmir sepoys, on his way to Gilgit, with a message from the thum to Colonel Durand. An amusing conversation took place between him and the Dogra major in charge of Nomal Fort, a bit of a wag in his way. "Can you tell me," inquired the major, "when this war of ours is going to begin?" "We Hunzas are men of peace," replied the diplomatic envoy; "we don't want to fight at all." "That is very foolish of you," exclaimed the major; "you have made all your *bandobast* for a war; so have we. After having taken all this trouble we must have a fight." "You appear to be speaking wisdom," said the Wakil. "How ridiculous we should look," continued the major, "if we did not fight after all this palaver. Let us fight. Besides, if you beat us, you could go farther and conquer all the Punjab, a rich country that, I assure you." The Wakil's language was very pacific, but not so, I believe, were the contents of the thum's letter he was bearing.

The road progressed rapidly, and we were neither surprised by night nor attacked by avalanches of rocks by day; the tribesmen observed our doings from distant heights, but so far took no steps to oppose us.

On November 26 I pushed on to our farther outpost, and our advanced base for the coming operations—the fortress of Chalt. The gloomy gorge I ascended on this day's journey appeared—even more so than did the country

below—to be a place devoted to the god of battles. There was not a single peasant's hut ; there was no vegetation ; but stone breastworks were to be seen all round, and every big rock was topped by a miniature fort capable of holding two or three men, affording refuge in case of surprise.

Just below Chalt the narrow gorge suddenly broadens out. The fortress stands on an extensive maidan high above



THE KANJUT VALLEY NEAR CHALT—THE TEMPORARY BRIDGE AND
THE KOTAL.

the river, and is surrounded by cultivated fields. It is square, with towers at intervals, and within its walls there is a camping-ground for some hundreds of men.

The Kanjut Valley is here joined by that of Chaprot, a few miles up which there is a fort and a considerable village. Chaprot is a separate little State that has been fought for and has changed hands several times. The present rajah, Sekandar Khan, a fine young fellow, who accompanied us on the campaign, is a son of the Thum of Nagar. Two of his brothers had been murdered in the previous spring by

the eldest brother, the ferocious Uzr Khan, who also threatened the life of Sekandar. The latter consequently bore no good-will to his royal relative, and was as anxious as anyone else for the success of our arms.

Chalt was a busy place for the next four days, our numbers ever swelling, as troops and grain coolies poured in in an almost constant stream.

It was Colonel Durand's intention to cross the river at Chalt, and advance up the valley by the Nagar or left bank. The indefatigable Captain Aylmer was therefore employed in constructing a temporary winter bridge across the torrent.

Two miles or so above Chalt the river is hemmed in by precipices, so that the river bed cannot be followed, and it would be necessary for our force to surmount a formidable ridge known as the Kotal, some eight or nine hundred feet in height, the summit of which was held by the enemy. Thus there was some chance of our first fight taking place almost within rifle-shot of Chalt fort.

On November 27, Colonel Durand and his staff arrived at Chalt. Dr Robertson also came in with his six Kafirs, great men in their own land, who were first to be shown our fashion of making war, and then to be carried round India ; so that they could return to their country and tell their friends what they had seen of the British Raj ; a wise policy, which in other cases has done much to assist the establishment of diplomatic relations with the tribes on our frontiers.

On November 28, having taken a walk back to the Chaichar Pari, I met the remainder of our force tramping up the road—first the Gurkhas ; then the Maharajah's troops ; and, lastly, the picturesque Punialis, those hereditary defenders of the frontier, with the tomtoms beating at their head, armed with swords and brass-studded shields of ox-hide, like Homeric warriors, as well as with Sniders, scampering like cats along the difficult track, and even taking short cuts by leaping from ledge to ledge to avoid the zigzags. Their rajah was with them—a stout, good-natured looking ruler, who appeared to be popular with his people.

The Dogra General, Suram Chand, who commanded the

Gilgit Brigade, arrived this day with his staff. The somewhat anomalous system under which the Imperial Service troops are employed in the field was now on its first trial. We had with us Dogra officers of high rank, but in action, at any rate, they were practically superseded by the British officers, generally subalterns attached to the Kashmir regiments, who led the men. No friction or other difficulty apparently resulted, and it seemed to me that great tact and sense were displayed on either side in dealing with these delicate relations.

On this night we saw numerous beacon fires up the valley and on the mountain-side beyond the river, a sign that the tribesmen meant fighting. A strong picket was now stationed by Aylmer's bridge, which was all but completed. Spedding finished the work at the Chaichar Pari this day, and the temporary road was thus ready. News arrived that the Hunza-Nagars had burnt all the stacked grass between this and Nilt, so as to prevent our obtaining fodder for our mules.

On November 30 the reply to Colonel Durand's ultimatum came in. It appeared that the Nagaris assembled at Nilt had half a mind to come to terms with us, when, suddenly, there rushed over from the Hunza fortress of Maiun, on the other side of the river, the ferocious hereditary Wazir of Hunza, who broke in upon the council, threatened to cut off the head of anyone who ventured to speak of peace, and, overpowering all present by the violence of his eloquence, brought the Nagaris to throw in their lot with the Hunzas. He insulted, maltreated, and was about to slay Colonel Durand's envoy, a native of Nagar, but eventually contented himself with robbing him of his horse and sending the man back to us on foot.

The written reply of the allied chieftains to Colonel Durand's ultimatum stated that they would have no roads in their territories, and boasted of their capacity to resist us. Like the other messages they had sent, it was couched in the most insolent terms.

Curious Oriental imagery was employed in these documents. In one of his earlier letters the thum asked why the British strayed thus into his country "like camels without nose-strings." In another letter he declared that he

cared nothing for the womanly English, as he hung upon the skirts of the manly Russians, and he warned Colonel Durand that he had given orders to his followers to bring him the Gilgit Agent's head on a platter. The thum was, indeed, an excellent correspondent about this time. He used to dictate his letters to the Court munshi, the only literate man, I believe, in the whole of his dominions, who wrote forcible, if unclassical, Persian. In one letter the thum somewhat shifted his ground, and spoke of other friends. "I have been tributary to China for hundreds of years. Trespass into China if you dare," he wrote to Colonel Durand. "I will withstand you, if I have to use bullets of gold. If you venture here, be prepared to fight three nations—Hunza, China, and Russia. We will cut your head off, Colonel Durand, and then report you to the Indian Government."

Negotiations having thus broken down, and all being now ready on our side, the welcome orders were issued that we should advance across the frontier on the following day, December 1. As we had left the greater portion of our little army behind to hold the different forts and posts between Chalt and our base, the Hunza-Nagar Field Force, as it was henceforth called, was thus constituted :—188 men of the 5th Gurkhas ; 28 men of the 20th Punjab Infantry ; 76 men of the Hazara Mountain Battery ; 7 Bengal Sappers and Miners ; and 661 Imperial Service troops (257 from the Ragu Pertab, or 1st Kashmir Infantry Regiment, and 404 from the Body Guard, or 2nd Kashmir Rifles) : in all, about 1000 regular troops. In addition to these were the Irregulars—the Punialis and Spedding's Pathans. Two thousand Balti coolies performed the bulk of the transport service. Sixteen British officers accompanied the Field Force.

On the eve of our advance, Surgeon Roberts gave us each an ominous little packet to put in the pocket, labelled "First Field Dressing," so that we might be able to apply preliminary bandages to our own or others' wounds. It recalled to mind the handing round of basins by a Channel-steamer steward before the commencement of an unpleasant voyage.

In the Order Book of this same evening Spedding was

instructed to make a practicable road over the Kotal on the following day, the ridge to be previously occupied by fifty men of the Ragu Pertab Regiment, under Lieutenant Widdicombe; while, later on in the day, the whole Field Force was to cross the river and bivouac on the Nagar side.

Early on the morning of December 1, Lieutenant Widdicombe crossed the river with his fifty men under cover of our guns, scaled the Kotal, and occupied the ridge without encountering any resistance. As he came up, the enemy retired. He found their stone breastworks at the summit empty, their fires still smouldering, and saw several men running towards Nilt by rough tracks across the mountains. It was evident that the Kanjutis had not held the Kotal in any force, and had employed this strong position merely as a post from which to observe our movements, having no intention of defending it.

Then Spedding, his staff, and the Pathans set out. We crossed Aylmer's bridge, and were now over the frontier, and had set foot on the soil of Nagar.

From the top of the Kotal, 800 feet above the river, there is a magnificent view up the Kanjut Valley. Some eight miles away we saw the towers of the fortress of Nilt, which we hoped to capture on the morrow.

The sepoy's gazed with interest at the distant towers of the reputedly impregnable fortress, from which the smoke could be seen rising, and passed rough soldiers' jests on the chances of the morrow. We could see no human beings in the valley beyond us, even with the aid of glasses, though, doubtless, keen eyes were watching us from the crags above.

But on looking back we could see life in plenty. The whole force of 1000 soldiers and 2000 coolies was slowly streaming down the cliffs by Chalt, then across the bridge in single file to the camping-place beneath us, where a zereba was being thrown up.

At sunset the numerous bivouac fires below had a cheery look, and having done our work, we descended the Kotal and found our way to the space allotted to us within the zereba, where our welcome dinner was ready.

The mules, which were fastened up close to us, favoured us with a tremendous concert during our meal, and all

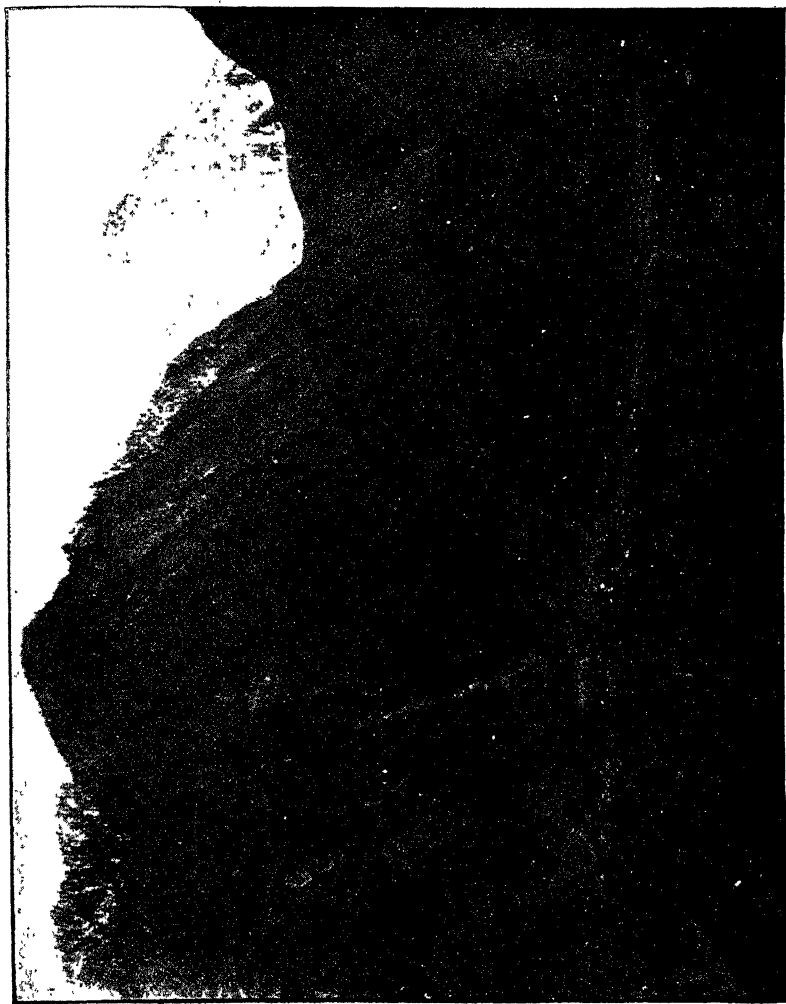
around was an orderly bustle of preparation for the night. We read the Order Book to see what our duties would be on the morrow, and turned into our sacks to sleep, the two hundred Pathans snoring round us. And so ended the first day of the campaign.

CHAPTER XX

ADVANCE ON NILT—THE GURKHAS AND GUNS COME INTO ACTION—
THE RIDGE CROWNED BY THE PUNIALIS—COLONEL DURAND
WOUNDED—A FORLORN HOPE—THE MAIN GATE BLOWN UP AND
THE FORT TAKEN BY ASSAULT—TWO V.C.'S—CAPTURE OF
ENEMY'S SUPPLIES

NILT is a very formidable place. As is the case in all Kanjut villages, the villagers live within the fort, which is a very rabbit-warren of strongly-built stone houses, two or three storeys high in places, with narrow alleys between, the whole enclosed within a great wall, carefully built of stones, and strengthened with massive timbers. This wall is 15 feet to 20 feet in height, and is 12 feet thick in most places, with large square towers at intervals. The flat roofs of this fortified village were covered with stones, and were so well constructed that they were proof against our shell when dropped upon them, while guns of very much heavier calibre than ours would have failed to make any impression on the great wall, the loopholes of which, again, were very small, and offered little mark to our riflemen. The garrison of Nilt was, indeed, practically secure from any ordinary mode of attack. Another wall, about 8 feet high, and also loopholed for musketry, surrounded the main wall, and from here the ground fell away precipitously on all sides, save at one point, where was the narrow approach to the chief gate. A steep watercourse served as a trench to that side of the fort which faced us as we approached, and here the enemy had placed a strong abattis of branches to oppose us. In all their preparations the Kanjutis exhibited considerable foresight and skill, and there can be no doubt that they had with them leaders of no mean military ability.

And now it will be understood that our men had no



NILT NULLAH FROM NEAR MAIUN.

In the foreground is Nilt, with its terraced cultivation. On the left of the nullah is the enemy's position, stormed on December 20, the shoot appearing like a light streak against the darker cliff. On the right is the ridge occupied by our covering party.

light task before them, for it was absolutely necessary to capture this strongly defended place, which the thum had flattered himself he could hold against us for a year and more, in the course of a few hours.

Admirably had Colonel Durand made his arrangements for this attack, which was well considered, wisely bold, and well calculated to inspire a wholesome terror in an enemy who were stubborn enough behind stone walls, but to whom the style of fighting they were to witness this afternoon was an entirely new experience.

Not being required with my Pathans for the time, I hurried up to the troops, and no sooner had I turned a protecting spur and beheld, to my surprise—for I little thought it was so near—the walls and towers of Nilt right in front of me, than there suddenly burst out a loud rattling of musketry, and I realised that the fighting had commenced in earnest. The Kanjutis were the first to open fire on us from their loopholes, and then the 5th Gurkhas, who led the attack, under Lieutenants Boisragon and Badcock, and who bore the brunt of this day's fighting, advanced quickly across the broken ground, section after section, making short rushes and, availing themselves of what cover there was, opened a brisk fire at short range on the loopholes of the fort and on the defenders whenever they showed themselves above the parapets, which was not often. The Kanjutis had judiciously cut down all the fruit-trees in the vicinity of the fort, so that they should not afford us cover.

Seeing Captain Bradshaw with a body of Kashmir sepoys on a bluff at the edge of the river-cliff, and not much more than 150 yards from the fort—an admirable spot from which to command a view of the proceedings—I joined him. To this place soon came up Lieutenant Molony with some dozen of the 20th Punjab Infantry and the Gatling gun, which he quickly brought into position, and directed showers of bullets on the loopholes opposite to us.

This was rather a warm corner. The bullets were whistling about our ears, and within a few minutes one poor fellow was mortally wounded while standing by me, and several others were hit. Molony himself had a marvellous escape. As he stooped to lay the Gatling, a bullet

passed through the middle of his helmet, cutting the top of his head, but only slightly, so that he did not report himself as wounded.

The enemy's fire was very well directed, and it is certain that they had excellent marksmen amongst them, even at long ranges, as we afterwards discovered. They had many arms of precision, in addition to their long home-made matchlocks—and they knew how to use them. Our loss in the course of this assault would have been exceedingly heavy had it not been for one fortunate circumstance. The Kanjutis had erred on the side of caution, and had made their loopholes so small that though they effectually protected their bodies, they hampered their fire considerably. The loopholes, again, were limited in number, and thus the enemy's fire was, luckily, of a somewhat intermittent nature.

Spedding, who had accompanied Colonel Durand throughout the day as galloper, shortly after this came across the maidan to the bluff. He was the bearer of the bad news that Colonel Durand had just been severely wounded. Spedding had received an order to take his Pathans up to a height which was held by the Punialis, as they would be useful in cutting off the retreat of the enemy. So we collected our men and scrambled up the steep hillside as fast as we could go, the Pathans greatly pleased at the chance of doing a bit of fighting on their own account, instead of standing by as idle spectators.

While we were still climbing we heard a tremendous explosion sounding above the din of guns and musketry, and perceived volumes of smoke rising high into the air. We put this down to the blowing-up of one of the powder magazines in the fort, or to the bursting of the enemy's big sher bacha. We attained the ridge, rushed over it, and came to the dip where the Punialis were, and from here suddenly looked right down into the heart of the fort, the flat roofs and alleys being spread out beneath us like a map.

And now a fascinating spectacle met our eyes. In the narrow lanes there was a confusion of men, scarcely distinguishable for the dust and smoke ; but in a moment we realised that fighting was going on within the fort itself—

that our sepoys had forced their way into it ; and then, as the atmosphere cleared somewhat, we saw that the Kanjut stronghold was won.

There appeared to be but a handful of the little Gurkhas within the fort ; but it was certainly theirs. We now saw our men pouring into the fort, while the defenders were rushing out of the gates at the back to escape beyond the nullah, many to be shot ere they got far. We did not rest a moment on the ridge, but clambered down with our Pathans to the fort, the men only stopping now and then to fire at the fugitives—with little effect, for it is no easy matter to hit a running man—while we, in our turn, were being fired at with similarly small results from the numerous breastworks, filled with Kanjut marksmen, that lined the opposite side of the Nilt nullah.

The whole stirring story of the taking of Nilt we did not learn for some hours later. In fact, I believe our entire force—with the exception of the handful of gallant men who did the deed—was in the dark as to what had happened. I will now explain how Nilt was stormed.

Any other method of attacking so strong a place being evidently unavailing, Colonel Durand just before he was wounded had given the order that the fort should be taken by assault. How this was done will long be remembered as one of the most gallant things recorded in Indian warfare. Captain Aylmer, as our engineer, was now instructed to blow up the main gate of the fort, so as to admit the storming-party. This gate, the only assailable one, did not face the direction from which our force had advanced, but was on the side of the fort which is under the mountain, and was difficult of approach.

First our guns and rifles opened a very heavy fire upon the fort, under cover of which 100 of the 5th Gurkhas, led by Lieutenants Boisragon and Badcock, made a rush at the outer wall, and began to cut their way through the abattis with their kukris, the garrison the while firing steadily into them. A small opening having thus been made, the three officers, closely followed by about half a dozen men, pushed their way through it. They then made for the wooden gate of the outer wall, which they soon hacked to pieces. They now found themselves in front of

the main wall, and while his companions fired into the loopholes—the officers using their revolvers—Captain Aylmer, accompanied by his Pathan orderly, rushed forward to the foot of the main gate, which was strongly built, and had been barricaded within with stones in anticipation of our coming. The enemy now concentrated their fire upon this gallant little band, and it is marvellous that any escaped death. Captain Aylmer placed his slabs of gun-cotton at the foot of the gate, packed them with stones, and ignited the fuse, all the while being exposed to the fire from the towers which flanked the gate, as well as from loopholes in the gate itself. He was shot in the leg from so short a distance that his clothes and flesh were burnt by the gunpowder. He and his orderly then followed the wall of the fort to a safe distance, and stood there awaiting the explosion. But there came no explosion, for the fuse was a faulty one, so Captain Aylmer had once more to face an almost certain death. He returned to the gate, readjusted the fuse, cut it with his knife, lit a match after two or three attempts, and re-ignited the fuse. While doing this he received another wound, his hand being crushed by a stone that was thrown from the battlements.

This time a terrific explosion followed, and at once, before even the dust had cleared or the stones had ceased dropping from the crumbling wall, the three British officers, with the six men at their back, clambered through the breach and were within Nilt Fort. Enveloped in smoke and dust, their comrades, who had been cutting their way through the abattis, could not find the breach; indeed, they did not realise that one had been effected and that their officers were within the gates; so for many minutes that little handful of gallant Englishmen and Gurkhas was engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with the garrison in the narrow alley leading from the gate. Having gained this position, they held it resolutely, but soon two were killed and most of them were wounded, and it was obvious that not one of them would be left alive unless they were soon supported. Accordingly Lieutenant Boisragon went outside the gate once more to find his men, and thus exposed himself not only to the fire of the enemy at the loopholes, but to that of our own covering party. In a very short time he was

back at the breach again, at the head of a number of Gurkhas who poured into the narrow alleys of the fort. The Kanjutis defended themselves at first, but soon lost heart before the fierce attack. The fort was soon swarming with our men, who hunted the Kanjutis through the intricate alleys and holes.

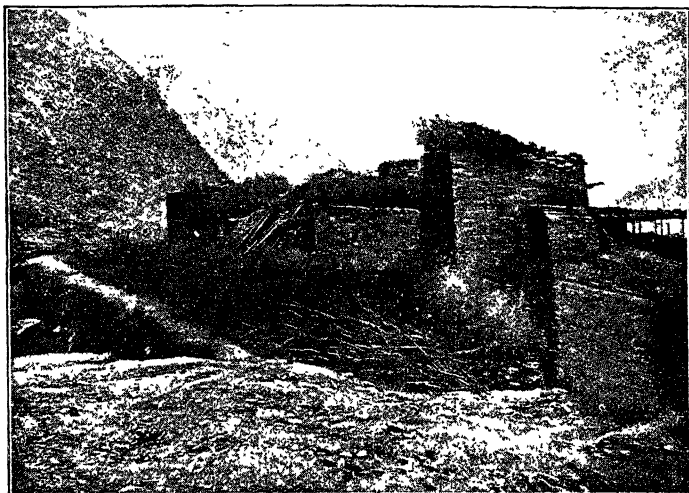
Thus was Nilt Fort taken after a daring rush which, perhaps, has not had its equal since Umbeyla. As is so



PRISONER IN NILT FORT, CAPTURED GUN, AND DOGRA SEPOYS.

often the case, the boldest course of action here proved to be the safest : our total loss was only six killed and twenty-seven wounded, a number which would have been much exceeded had what some might consider a more prudent course of action been adopted. The loss of the enemy was uncertain ; but it was estimated that over eighty were killed in the course of the action. Of the gallant handful of men who followed the three officers through the breach, two were killed and nearly all were wounded. Lieutenant Badcock was severely wounded, and Captain Aylmer

received no fewer than three severe wounds, which may be considered as a very lucky escape when it is remembered what he did. Captain Aylmer and Lieutenant Boisragon, have both been decorated with the Victoria Cross, which they thoroughly deserved, while Lieutenant Badcock, who in the opinion of his brother-officers had also earned that highest reward of valour, received the Distinguished Service Order.



NILT FORT IN JANUARY 1892, AFTER THE TOWERS HAD BEEN BLOWN UP.

Many of our men, lying down at the edge of the cliff above the Nilt nullah, now attempted to pick off the fugitives, who were bolting to the distant forts, while the enemy's marksmen, who held all the sangas beyond the nullah, fired at us occasionally, and their sher bachas—roughly-constructed cannon, some of which, however, were heavier than our seven-pounders—propelled shot and shell at us from seemingly inaccessible ledges high up the mountain-sides. This desultory interchange of fire went on till sunset, producing a good deal of noise and little else.

Shortly after descending from the ridge I passed through the breach and entered the captured fortress. Across the ruined gateway lay the dead body of a Gurkha, one of Boisragon's gallant handful, and close to him was the corpse of Mahomet Shah, Wazir of Nagar, and one of the enemy's best leaders, who had been shot by Badcock as the storming-party rushed in. Many dead Kanjutis were lying in the narrow alleys and behind the loopholes of the walls ; and though most of the garrison had escaped, there were several tribesmen still hiding away in the numerous dark holes and crannies of this curious place. The whole labyrinth of lanes was full of our sepoys, who were busy hunting up these men, and a shout was raised whenever another poor wretch was dragged out into the light. The Gurkhas, exasperated at the sight of their dead comrades, were like little tigers ; their faces had lost all the jolly expression habitual to them ; their savage passions were up, and, had they been allowed, they would doubtless have avenged their friends by cutting the throat of every Kanjuti they could catch with their kukris. The Pathans and Dogras would have been no more merciful. But all these were disciplined troops, and the three or four officers who were within the fort effectually prevented outrage of any description ; the sepoys were soon drawn up outside the fort, and all was order and quiet routine again after the momentary excitement that naturally followed the successful assault.

Our surgeons, Doctors Roberts and Luard, had plenty of work on their hands that evening. We heard that Colonel Durand's wound was a very severe one ; he had been hit by a jezail bullet, and at first it was feared that his injuries would prove fatal. This bullet, when extracted, was found to be a garnet enclosed in lead. There were sacks full of similar bullets within the fort.

A small garrison was left to guard the fort, but the greater portion of the force encamped at about half a mile from it, among the cultivated fields of the maidan. The broken irrigation-canal was repaired, and we were then well supplied with water from the Nilt stream. We saw the flickering fires of the enemy's pickets scattered all over the mountain-side beyond Nilt ; but sher bachas and muskets

became silent at sunset, and we had a quiet night's rest in camp after the exciting day.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FIGHT OF DECEMBER 3—WE ARE REPULSED WITH LOSS—WORK OF SPEDDING'S ENGINEERS—NAGDU'S DISCOVERY

WE were up at dawn on December 3. We understood that Spedding's Pathans were to make a road across the Nilt nullah, under cover of the guns, and that the whole force was to then advance and attack the large Nagar fortress of Thol, and the other defences on the maidan ahead. So it was proposed; but the programme was not carried out, and as we were this day distinctly repulsed with loss, I think the enemy can fairly claim the skirmish to have been a victory for them.

One's progress from point to point on this day, and on many days afterwards, was rather like that of a rabbit bolting from cover to cover when fowling-pieces are about. Thus, to go between this gully-head and the fort, I had to cross an open space which the enemy had effectually cleared with their rifles an hour or so before. It must have been grand sport for the Kanjut marksmen, who invariably gave each one of us a volley as he hurried by. There were also some exposed corners in the fort itself, and on the road between the fort and the camp, which we soon came to know, and across which we used to travel as if bent on some extremely urgent business. There were some less dangerous places, again, only exposed to the fire of distant sangas, by which we walked in a somewhat more dignified manner, though without loitering. Day after day each of us was individually fired at but never hit, and one began to realise what a very small percentage of bullets really have their billets.

Before carrying this narrative further, it will be well to explain the nature of the extraordinary position which now confronted us, than which it would be difficult to imagine a stronger, and before which, despite all our efforts, we had

now to remain for eighteen days ; a check which, as will be easily understood, was attended with serious danger ; for the hostile tribes of the Indus Valley, encouraged by our failure, were actually preparing to fall upon Boonji, while the Kanjutis themselves were about to act on the offensive, and attack our long line of communication. Seeing how small our available force was, and how we were cut off, by the snow-covered passes from all possibility of reinforcement until the following summer, it is quite possible that a disaster would have occurred had the enemy been able to hold us in check much longer.

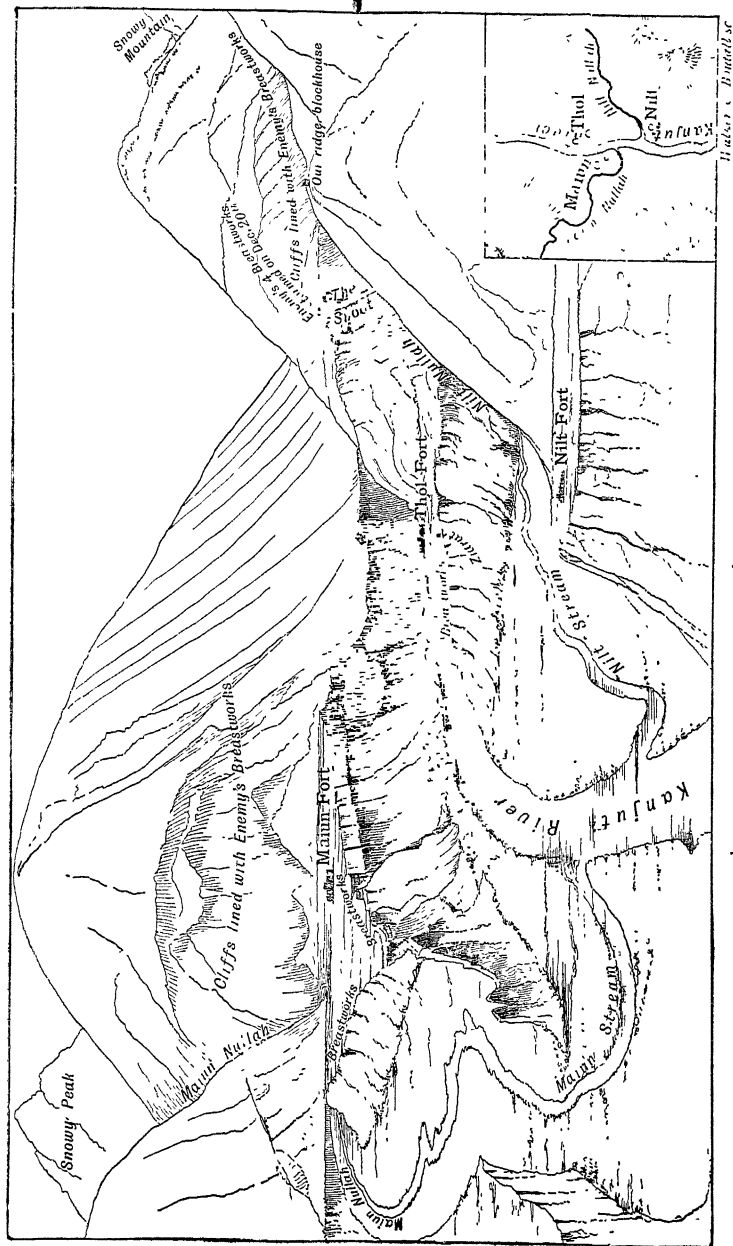
The bird's-eye view, in conjunction with the illustrations of Nilt and Maiun, will render the following description intelligible.

The Kanjut Valley, between the bases of the mountains, is here about fifteen hundred yards wide. On the Nilt side of the river, the precipitous Nilt nullah, descending from the glaciers of Mount Rakaposhi, barred our advance, the opposite side of this nullah being defended by numerous sangas and sher bachas.

On the other side of the Kanjut River, another tributary nullah, equally precipitous, and with its farther side defended by the cliff-encompassed fortress of Maiun, also formed a seemingly insuperable obstacle. Here, too, the sangas lined the cliffs from the glaciers to the river bed.

On the Nagar side of the river, beyond the Nilt nullah, a well-cultivated flat extends along the foot of the mountains, and falls in precipitous cliffs, some hundreds of feet in height, towards the river bed. On this plateau stood the large, square fortress of Thol, with four towers on each of its sides, surrounded by a deep moat, and a strongly fortified ziarat or shrine, both within 2000 yards of Nilt.

We found that the enemy had spared no pains to make it impossible for us to turn this position by crossing either of these two nullahs. They had broken away what roads there had been and left walls of rock in their place ; and where the slopes of the cliffs were not so steep as to be inaccessible, they had turned the watercourses over the edge of them, so that, as it was now freezing hard in the valley, smooth ramparts of solid ice were quickly formed.



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE ENEMY'S LINE OF DEFENCE.

Such a position as this is surely unexampled even in Himalayan warfare. From the glaciers to the river bed we were faced by these impregnable cliffs, lined with marksmen, and easily defended by what is so far more terrifying to men than any rifle fire, an avalanche of rocks, only requiring the displacing of a single stone to start it from above.

Again, an advance up the river bed would have been attended with a fearful loss of life; continuous lines of sangas ran along the cliffs on either side of the river for miles, ready to receive us with their raking cross-fire, while the river bed itself was encumbered with boulders, so that progress along it could but be slow; and, in one place at least, a formidable breast-work extended right across the beach.

It is estimated that some 4000 men were holding this wonderful position. It was a most vigilant enemy, too, that we had to deal with. The Kanjutis seemed to read our thoughts, for some of our most secretly-planned night attacks were anticipated by them. They were always ready at the threatened point; showers of rock would sweep down the hillsides, and large fire-balls of resinous wood would be rolled down the nullahs, their blaze disclosing the presence of our men and making a rapid retreat necessary.

The problem—no easy one—before our leaders, was how to turn this strong natural position with as little loss as possible, for we could ill afford to waste men. About forty men had already been killed or incapacitated by wounds; of our British combatant officers five were now *hors de combat*, and only twelve were left to us.

The following were the officers now with the Field Force. Colonel Durand had been our Political Officer as well as our Commander. After he was wounded, Captain L. J. E. Bradshaw, 35th Bengal Infantry, succeeded to the command, while Surgeon-Major Robertson was entrusted with the political duties. Captain R. H. Twigg, 12th Bengal Infantry, was Deputy-Assistant Adjutant-General to the Force. Captain C. J. Mackenzie, Seaforth Highlanders, aide-de-camp to His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, was Deputy-Assistant Quartermaster-General. Of the three

officers of the 5th Gurkhas, Lieutenant G. H. Boisragon was now alone left, so Lieutenant J. Manners Smith, formerly of the same regiment, was attached to that gallant little corps. Lieutenant C. A. Molony, Royal Artillery, took charge of the mountain battery in place of Lieutenant R. St. G. Gorton, wounded. Lieutenant C. V. F. Townshend, Central India Horse, Lieutenant F. Duncan, 23rd Bengal Infantry, and Lieutenant G. T. Widdicombe, 9th Bengal Infantry, were attached to the Ragu Pertab Regiment of the Imperial Service troops; while Lieutenant J. McD. Baird, 24th Bengal Infantry, and Lieutenant F. H. Taylor, 3rd Sikh Infantry, were attached to the Bodyguard Regiment of the same force. Captain W. H. M. Stewart commanded the detachment of the 20th Punjab Infantry, and superintended the transport service. Two good officers had to be spared from the front to guard our long line of communication, Captain Kembell remaining at Boonji, in view of a Chilas raid; while Lieutenant C. S. Williams, 43rd Bengal Infantry, after the fight at Nilt, was given the command of our advanced base at Chalt, and acted as Commissariat officer.

So that the remaining officers might be relieved of the heavy work now thrown upon them, the civilians in camp were invited to volunteer to undertake outpost and other duties. We were all, of course, very glad to do this, and were forthwith placed upon the roster as officers. Lennard had already been attached to the guns, having had experience of that branch of the service. Beech was made Provost-Marshal. I was attached to the Ragu Pertab Regiment. Spedding was appointed Chief Engineer to the Force, with the local rank of Captain, and Appleford was Assistant-Engineer. Blaker, of Spedding's staff, was not with us at the front, but was made commander of Ramghat, near which place he was superintending the construction of the road.

For the eighteen days we remained here the Kanjutis and ourselves were always firing at each other from our respective sides of the nullah. Our guns and rifles at any rate compelled the enemy to keep within their fortified villages by daylight. On the other hand, their marksmen

made it inadvisable for any of us to show his head above the parapets of Nilt Fort.

Early on the morning of December 4 I was sent up with eighty Dogras to relieve Lieutenant Taylor on the ridge, and do picket duty there for twenty-four hours. From this height one commanded a fine view up the valley, and over the whole of the enemy's positions, and could recognise at a glance the enormous strength of this formidable line of defence, this so far impregnable gateway of the robber defile in front of which the capture of Nilt had now brought us.

While I was on duty on the ridge this night, I heard avalanches of rocks rolling down the opposite cliff-side at frequent intervals. It was evident, therefore, that the Kanjutis were under the impression we should attempt an assault from the bed of the nullah, and that some possible, though difficult, way existed, by which their position could be scaled hereabouts. Every effort was made on our side to discover where this assailable point was.

We felt our way carefully, conducting reconnaissances to find out the weak points in their position, while feints and attempted night surprises followed each other. The result of these reconnaissances was a decision to make another attempt at forcing the enemy's position, at the lower end of the Nilt nullah, on the morning of December 8. At daybreak we were to open a tremendous fire, both from Nilt Fort and from the ridge, on the enemy's breastworks beyond the ravine, so as to cover Spedding and his men while they rapidly made the road across the nullah practicable for our troops.

It was arranged that as soon as the road had been opened out and all was ready for the advance, Molony was to signal to me with a flag from the gun bastion, and that then, leaving the Ragu Pertabs and Punialis to keep up the fire into the opposite sangas, I was to bring the Gurkhas down to the fort (as they would be required to guard the guns during the advance) and join the Ragu Pertab Regiment, to which I was attached, and which, under Lieutenant Townshend's command, was to attack the ziarat and the sangas near it, while the rest of the force was to assault Thol Fort.

Such was the programme ; and as I clambered up the

hill to the ridge, I thought that the following day promised to be a sufficiently exciting one for us all.

In the middle of the night, which was very black, just as I was about to set out on visiting-rounds, and all having been quite still so far, a fearful din suddenly broke out below, which for a moment led me to think that the enemy had attempted a night surprise on our camp. Tomtoms were loudly beaten ; men were shouting ; a heavy fire was opened in every direction ; while avalanche after avalanche of rocks thundered down the side of the nullah facing the picket.

On walking to the edge of the cliff I saw by the flashes of fire that pierced the darkness below that the greater part of this tremendous demonstration came from the enemy's lower sangas, the defenders of which, at intervals, rolled large fireballs of resinous wood down the hillside, which fitfully illuminated the bottom of the nullah. It was as if the Kanjutis were repelling an attack on our side, or had engaged in this wild firing in some sudden panic of apprehension. But I could not arrive at any certain conclusion as to what was going on. From where I stood it was a curious and fascinating spectacle. So dark was it that I appeared to be looking down into some bottomless black gulf, for nothing was to be seen save the momentary flashes of flame—as from invisible combatants in mid-space—and the phantom-like, faintly-gleaming wreaths of smoke ; for it was only when the blazing fireballs were set rolling that one could distinguish anything of the solid earth.

The firing and rock-rolling were carried on through the night with little intermission. At dawn I looked down from the ridge and saw that our two seven-pounders were shelling the lower sanga, and that the whole of the little gully in which Spedding's men had commenced to make a road on the morning of the 3rd was packed with sepoy, sitting as close as they could together. This led me to suppose that Spedding was working out of sight lower down, and that the advance would soon be made.

The enemy on the opposite ridge now opened fire both on my picket and on the fort below ; so, in accordance with the orders I had received, I set my men to fire volleys at the loopholes of these sangas in order to silence them.

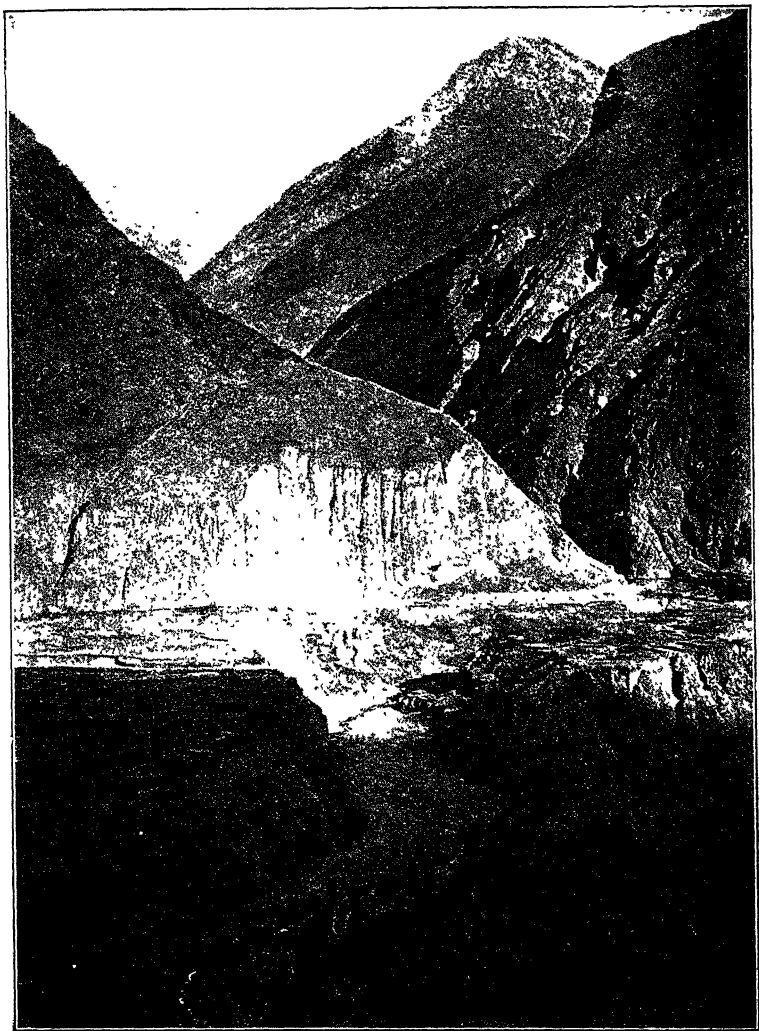
Hour after hour passed by, and still the signal I was anxiously looking out for did not appear on the gun bastion. The firing became intermittent, at last ceased altogether on both sides, and a complete silence followed. Our sepoy, several hundreds strong, were still crouching motionless in the gully; but no other men, friends or foes, were anywhere visible.

We waited thus, shivering in the freezing air on the ridge, until the afternoon, when Captain Stewart came up with some sepoy to relieve me, and I was at last able to obtain information as to the meaning of the mysterious doings below.

The men I saw in the gully were to have led the attack, and were provided with scaling-ladders for the assault of the enemy's lower sanga. They had been placed in the gully, under cover of the night, ready to push forward as soon as a track had been opened below. It was clear that information of our preparations had been carried over to Maiun by spies in our camp. The enemy, no doubt under the impression that our attack was to be made by night, had strongly reinforced these sangas, and had proceeded to oppose the passage of the nullah by the firing and rock-rolling I had heard. They had thus anticipated us, and to such an extent had they strengthened the sangas at this point that our guns had this morning proved quite ineffectual to silence them. Under these circumstances Captain Bradshaw abandoned his intention, and the attack was postponed.

The next day, December 9, some men were observed upon the opposite bank of the Kanjut River, upon whom our sepoy opened fire, until it became evident that these people had no hostile intention, but wished to communicate with us. One of our officers accordingly walked down to the river-bank, and made signs to them that they could come on with safety. All firing ceased on both sides, and one of the men swam across the river on a *mushok*, and was escorted to our head-quarters.

He brought a letter from the Thum of Hunza, which stated that His Majesty was quite prepared to make peace, but that he would not accede to our demands as expressed in Colonel Durand's ultimatum, and was as determined as



MAIUN NULLAH FROM NILT.

ever to have no roads made through his country. He pointed out that the capture of Nilt was but a small affair, of which we had no cause to boast, and had been more or less anticipated by his generals ; but that we must know that it would be impossible for us to advance any farther, so impregnable were his defences. The envoy carried back our Political Officer's reply, in which the thum was informed that it was useless for him to send us letters unless he was prepared to do as the Government of India had ordered. Half an hour after the envoy had left our camp hostilities were renewed, and an exceptionally lively little artillery and rifle fire was exchanged, as if to make up for the time wasted in the futile truce.

The cold increased daily, and the steep mountain behind us so shut us in that the sun's rays could only reach our camp for about half an hour a day. The snow came ever lower down the hillsides ; but, luckily, so far, none fell in the valley.

This long check in the face of the enemy, and our repeated failures to turn their position, did not exercise such a depressing effect upon the troops as might have been expected. There was a good deal of work to do, and amusements were found to occupy spare time. Footballs had been brought from Gilgit, and now sepoy and officers used to play together every afternoon. The Gurkhas were very fond of the game, and threw themselves into it with great energy and boisterous laughter, evidently enjoying themselves thoroughly. The enemy either looked upon football as some dangerous magic rite, or objected to our enjoying ourselves, for whenever the game commenced they would drum their tomtoms, and open fire upon the football-ground. It was a novel experience to play football under artillery fire ; but the sher bachas made such very bad practice that our players and spectators paid not the slightest attention to them. We had an opportunity once of retaliating on these would-be sport-spoilers. Some men began to play at polo on a maidan beyond Thol, under the impression that they were out of range ; but our marksmen with Martini-Henrys at the loopholes of Nilt showed them that they were mistaken, and made the players scurry away.

Each night our engineers were at work at the bottom of the Nilt nullah building sangas, the most advanced of which was in the torrent-bed, right under the enemy's lower sanga. From the shelter of these it was possible for us to closely inspect the river-cliffs for a way to surmount them, an examination which could not otherwise have been conducted by daylight under the enemy's fire. And not only did these sangas form posts of observation, but our industry in pushing forward breastwork beyond breastwork at this point puzzled and alarmed the enemy, made them concentrate their forces here, and distracted their attention from those other portions of their long line of defence which our scouts were diligently exploring in hopes of discovering the weak spot. There is little doubt that our final assault occurred where it was least expected by the enemy, else our losses would have been very heavy. To the uninitiated our proceedings at this time must have appeared mysterious, and even objectless. As a matter of fact, the game was being cleverly played.

On December 13 it was my turn to be in charge of the river-bed picket. To reach this one had to crawl along the precipices beneath Nilt Fort, somewhat to the risk of one's neck; for this picket could only be relieved under cover of the darkness. By daylight the marksmen in the enemy's lower sangas could have easily picked off every man of us as we descended the crags in front of them.

It was 3 A.M. when I set out through the darkness with twenty Gurkhas. I heard a good deal of firing in the direction I was going, as if the enemy were attacking the picket. Isolated as it was, the Kanjutis might have cut off this outpost without difficulty had they set themselves about it. After climbing along the steep rocky ledges for some way, we came to a cleft in the cliff, and at the bottom of this I found the sanga which we were to occupy. It was made of sandbags, and there was only room in it for seven men standing or sitting in a cramped position, an unpleasant place to pass a day and night in in this bitter weather. I left the bulk of my men in a sheltered corner at the top of the cleft, and held the sanga with six sepoy.

At daybreak I had breakfast to warm myself up—cold tea and meat I had brought with me, both partly frozen.

Wishing to survey my surroundings, I raised my head above the sandbags for a moment; but a bullet that whizzed by me from the lower sanga and flattened itself on the rock behind abated my curiosity, and I contented myself with such observation as was possible through the loopholes.

The hours went by without incident until some time in the afternoon, when I heard a shouting in the enemy's sangas, as if they were holding communication with men at a distance. Next, from the cliff on our side of the nullah, I heard a voice calling, "Khabardar! khabardar!" (Have a care; be on your guard!), as if one of our men were endeavouring to warn us of an approaching danger. We stood ready, not knowing what was about to happen, and I half-expected to be attacked by a body of the enemy from round the corner of the nullah, when suddenly a man appeared, standing on the crags above us, in whom I recognised one of Spedding's Pathans. He clambered down to us, and delivered some written instructions to me. In these I was informed that a half-hour's truce had been arranged to give the enemy an opportunity of burying their numerous dead, who were scattered all over the side of the nullah, and that I was therefore not to allow my men to fire during that period.

We took advantage of this suspension of hostilities to step out of the confined sanga and stretch our legs a bit on the sands of the river-bed. The Kanjutis observed the truce faithfully, and did not open fire upon us; the defenders of their near sangas did not venture to show themselves, but I perceived that the walls of Maiun were crowded with people. Not having a watch with me, and not having any idea when the stipulated half-hour was supposed to commence and when it would be over, I did not allow my men to stay outside many minutes. Besides, to promenade thus within seventy yards of so many of the enemy's rifles might prove too strong a temptation for some of them, so we soon retired once more to the security of our uncomfortable little breastwork.

During the few minutes that I was outside the sanga I had a good look at the position opposite, but could see nothing like a feasible track. The easiest ascent appeared

to be by the Ziarat ; but it was here that the ingenious enemy had directed the watercourse over the cliff and produced an unassailable slope of ice. Shortly after dusk another messenger came down to me with instructions that I should bring my men back to camp, as no picket would be stationed in the nullah that night. In fact, this little sanga was never afterwards held by us.

We remained day after day before these seemingly impregnable heights. Each night a plucky Dogra, named Nagdu, was engaged in reconnaissances. He was a skilled cragsman, and it was his idea that it would be possible to scale the high cliffs where they faced our blockhouse on the ridge. He suggested that he should take with him twelve good men accustomed to hill-climbing, and make the attempt on a dark night. He would himself go first, and lower a rope when necessary to assist the others. On reaching the summit they would surprise the little sanga that stood at the cliff-edge, and by holding it would prevent the enemy from rolling down rocks on our troops, who, according to his plan, were to ascend by the same route on the following dawn and carry the whole position.

It was a bold design, and it appeared to be practicable ; so the brave Nagdu was allowed to try what he could do. One dark night he and a party of men of his regiment noiselessly ascended the Nilt nullah. But the watchful—or well-informed—Kanjutis were aware of the presence of our sepoys, and they had not gone far before the alarm was given. First a gun was fired as signal in the enemy's lower sanga, and at once a loud shout was carried up the mountain-side from sanga to sanga, the tomtoms beat, the fireballs and rock avalanches plunged down the precipices, and fire was opened from a hundred rifles and jezails. Nagdu and his men had to shelter themselves behind a rock for a time, and then to seize what opportunities they could to creep from cover to cover back to the fort. On the following day it was observed that two new sangas had arisen in the night just over the portion of the cliff that Nagdu had proposed to scale.

This did not discourage the indomitable Nagdu, who tried again and again, and at last his perseverance was rewarded. He succeeded in climbing alone, unobserved,

to the foot of the enemy's sangas ; and now, having satisfied himself that the thing could be done, he returned, and promptly thought out the outline of the scheme of attack which was afterwards adopted with success. Nagdu is a quiet, simple-looking young fellow, to whom no one at first sight would attribute the possession of many brains ; but he proved himself to be an excellent soldier, as full of resource as he was brave. His portrait will be found on page 144. Of the two sepoys in the picture, he is the tall one on the left.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FIGHT OF DECEMBER 20—THE STORMING-PARTY—THE CLIFF
SCALED—CAPTURE OF THE FOUR SANGAS—THE ENEMY'S POSITION
TURNED—FLIGHT OF THE GARRISONS—ANOTHER V.C.

STILL our little force remained in front of the great gorge while reconnaissances, feints, and attempted night surprises followed each other until at last, as was certain to be the reward of such patient but determined trying, the day came when an admirably designed plan of attack could be carried out.

Nagdu, as I have said, had scaled the cliffs by night, and demonstrated the practicability of the ascent so far as he himself was concerned ; but so difficult was the way he had discovered, that it was held to be impossible to take a body of troops up these precipices in the dark. It was therefore proposed that the sangas should be stormed in broad daylight, under cover of heavy fire. Nagdu himself suggested this plan to our Political Officer when describing what he had ascertained of the nature of the ground. He said that the cliff below the sangas was so steep that the defenders could not possibly see what was going on below, unless they came out of their cover and looked over the edge. Our marksmen could prevent this.

A careful examination of the position through glasses from our blockhouse on the ridge completed the information that Nagdu had brought. The accessibility of this portion of the cliff having been thus determined, it was

obviously important that we should make our attack without delay, else the enemy, as they had invariably done hitherto, would get wind of our intention, and take steps to frustrate it.

At this time Captain Bradshaw happened to be at Gilgit, having been compelled to ride there in order to consult with Colonel Durand on the troublesome subject of supplies and other matters; the command therefore devolved on Captain Colin Mackenzie, who carried the above plan into execution.

Complete secrecy was observed, and the spies in our camp had no suspicion of what was about to happen. On the afternoon of December 19 I was called aside and told that on that night Lieutenant Manners Smith and Lieutenant Taylor, with one hundred men of the Kashmir Bodyguard Regiment, fifty of whom were Gurkhas, the other fifty Dogras, all hill-men and accustomed to clamber over difficult precipices, were to set out for the bottom of the Nilt nullah, with the object of ascending its bed till they came to the foot of the cliff at the point where it was intended to scale it, and there remain hidden until daylight, when our sharpshooters would line the ridge above and cover their advance. I was informed that I had been put in command of the detachment of the 20th Punjab Infantry, and that with these Pathans, the best marksmen in our force, it would be my duty on the morrow to silence one of the four sangas that were to be assaulted. I was instructed to take up a Martini-Henry that had belonged to one of our dead Gurkhas, and do my share of firing at the opposite loopholes, for anyone who could shoot straight would be of use on this occasion.

The moon rose at ten o'clock this night, so it was necessary that the storming-party should reach their hiding-place in the nullah before that hour. While we were in the middle of our dinner at the headquarters mess, it being seven o'clock, Lieutenant Manners Smith left us; the little force under his command was paraded, and then noiselessly marched off under cover of the darkness. The men took with them their greatcoats, blankets, and cooked rations. Manners Smith had, as I have said, earned a reputation as a most intrepid cragsman among the mountaineers of the

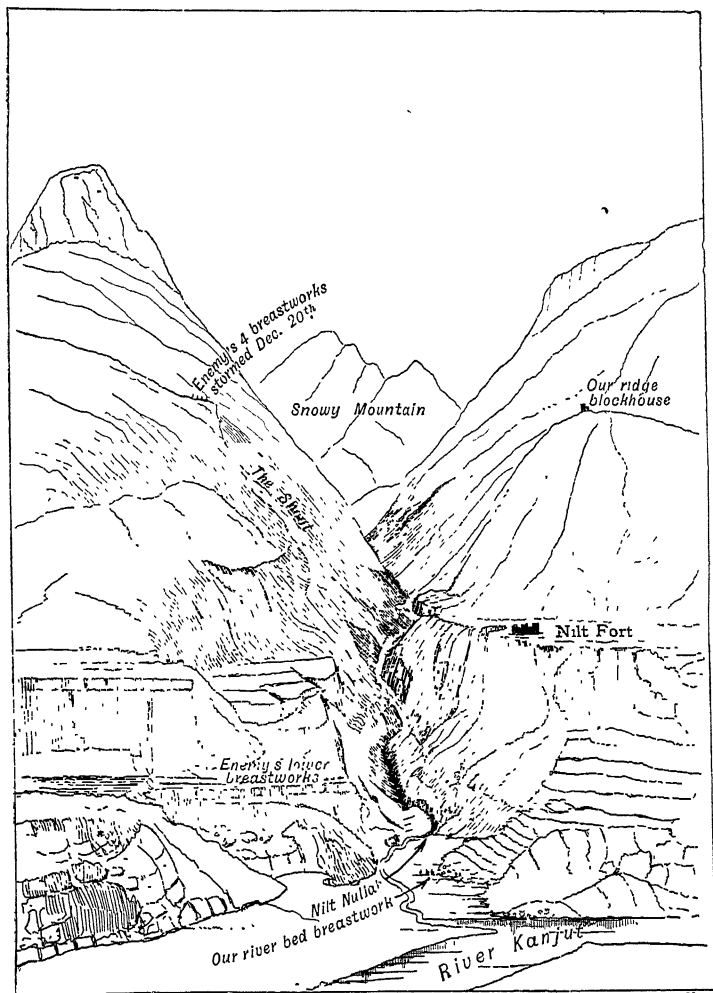
Gilgit district. No better officer than he could have been chosen to lead men up that rocky wall.

It was calculated that the best part of two hours would be occupied by the storming-party in reaching the hiding-place in the nullah ; so it may be imagined how anxiously we others, sitting in the mess-tent, listened for every sound, knowing that not only might this attempt prove unsuccessful should the enemy detect the presence of our men in the nullah, but that a fearful havoc would not improbably be wrought amongst the latter by the deadly rock-avalanches from the sangas.

One hour had passed quietly, when suddenly there arose a loud noise of cheering and beating of tomtoms from the fortress of Maiun. We held our breath to listen, but no sound of firing or of falling rocks followed ; all was still as ever in the Nilt nullah. This was very reassuring ; for it was evident this was no alarm that the Maiun men had raised, but that, on the contrary, they were off their guard, and were engaging in one of the periodical orgies with which they were wont to keep their spirits up, while the noise of their festivity would probably distract the attention of the men garrisoning the sangas above the Nilt nullah. From our point of view the men of Maiun could not have chosen a more opportune night for their *tamasha*.

Two hours and more had passed since the two British officers and their one hundred men had left us, and still there was no sound in the nullah. All was well ; the enemy had neither observed nor heard our men as they crept up under their defences. We went to bed that night relieved of our apprehensions and hopeful for the morrow. It seemed as if our luck had indeed turned at last.

Before daybreak the covering-party paraded, ascended the ridge, and took up a position facing the four sangas that were to be stormed. We had one hundred and thirty-five rifles, all selected shots, viz. fifty rifles of the 5th Gurkhas under Lieutenant Boisragon, twenty-five rifles of the 20th Punjab Infantry under myself, thirty rifles of the Ragu Pertab Regiment under Lieutenant Townshend, and thirty rifles of the Bodyguard Regiment under Lieutenant Baird. Lieutenant Molony was also here with the two seven-pounders. Lieutenant Widdicombe was left



Walker & Bontall sc.

NILT NULLAH FROM MAIUN.

in charge of Nilt Fort, all the loopholes of which were lined with rifles.

When we came on the ridge in the freezing mist of dawn the men on picket-duty in the blockhouse there, having no idea of what was intended, looked somewhat astonished to see so many of our officers and men appear. The men of the covering-party, lying down, lined the edge of the ridge, and Captain Colin Mackenzie gave the order to commence firing. We were divided into four parties, each of which now opened a steady independent fire on one particular sanga. We concentrated all our fire on the four dangerous sangas, the distance between which and ourselves was between four and five hundred yards; at this range the fire of our sharpshooters was so accurate that the return fire soon slackened, and then ceased altogether. It was evident that in the face of such a shower of lead as we were directing upon them no man dared stand behind his musket at a loophole, still less come out of cover to hurl down rocks. At the same time our two guns were busy throwing shrapnel on the four doomed breastworks.

Lieutenant Manners Smith was not to commence his ascent until we had carried on this fire for half an hour. Now, he with his fifty Gurkhas began to clamber up the steep rocks, Lieutenant Taylor following with the fifty Dogras. From our ridge we could see the little stream of men gradually winding up, now turning to the right, now to the left, now going down again for a little way when some insurmountable obstacle presented itself, to try again at some other point, presenting very much the appearance of a scattered line of ants picking their way up a rugged wall.

At last Manners Smith, who had been scrambling up, active as a cat, ahead of his men, attained a point some 800 feet above the nullah-bed; and here he met with a check. After a thorough trial, it was obvious to him, and still more so to us who could see the whole situation from our ridge, that the precipice above him was absolutely inaccessible; it was therefore now necessary for him and his men to turn round and retrace their steps down to the nullah-bed.

Nearly two hours had thus been wasted. Looking on with some dismay, we began to fear lest this should prove

yet another of our failures. But though this check had caused considerable delay, the attack was by no means to be abandoned yet. Lieutenant Manners Smith is not a man to be easily discouraged; he was determined to accomplish the scaling of the cliff somewhere, and he now flag-signalled to Captain Colin Mackenzie that he would make another attempt a little lower down the nullah; this he accordingly did, as soon as he had got his scattered party together again.

He now hit upon an easier route, probably the one Nagdu had originally taken in the night. As we fired over his head at the now silenced sangas, we saw him start from this fresh point and clamber higher and higher, till he and a handful of the more active and venturesome sepoy who immediately followed him were within sixty yards of one of the four sangas on the edge of the cliff.

It was, happily, not until this moment that the enemy had any idea that a party of sepoy was scaling the heights. The Maiun people first detected our men, and shouted a warning across the river, which was carried up the mountain-side from sanga to sanga until the men holding the four sangas with which we were immediately concerned realised that their position was being stormed, and that unless they bestirred themselves to make a resolute defence our sepoy would be amongst them, and their retreat would be cut off. Rocks were now thrown over the sanga walls, and showers of stones poured down the cliff. Happily by this time most of the gallant little party had passed the points most exposed to these deadly missiles, and the rocks either swept down the steep shoots to the left of our men, or bounded harmlessly over their heads. Several men, however, were more or less seriously wounded. Lieutenant Taylor himself was knocked down by a rock, but luckily received no injuries of any account.

The two British officers manœuvred their men admirably, watching their opportunities, working their way from point to point, with cool judgment, between the avalanches, and slowly gaining the heights foot by foot. It was a fearful thing to watch from our side. A little lack of caution or an unlucky accident might have so easily led to scores of our men being swept off the face of the cliff during this

perilous ascent. We poured in a fiercer fire than ever to silence the sangas ; but we could not prevent the defenders from throwing rocks from the inside of their breastworks, which, dislodging others, produced dangerous cataracts of stones.

Still our men pushed pluckily on up the steep slopes under the sangas ; while the Kanjutis became desperate, knowing that there was no hope for them should the sepoys once attain the summit. Some of the enemy exhibited great bravery, boldly standing out in the open and rolling down the ready-piled-up rocks as fast as they were able, until they were shot down by the marksmen on our side of the ridge.

At last—and it was a moment of intense suspense for the onlookers—we saw Lieutenant Manners Smith make a sudden dash forward, reach the foot of the first sanga, clamber round to the right of it, and step on to the flat ground beside it. A few sepoys were close at his heels, and then the men, having got to the back of the sanga, began to use their rifles. A few shots in rapid succession, a rush through the opening behind with bayonets and kukris, Lieutenant Manners Smith himself pistolling the first man, and the sanga was ours, those of the garrison who were not killed within being shot as they fled down the hillside by our marksmen on the ridge, and from the battlements of Nilt Fort.

More men having now rejoined Lieutenant Manners Smith, the other three sangas were rapidly cleared in the same way, Nagdu, bold as ever, rushing into one sanga, and fighting the defenders single-handed. The position being now secure, Lieutenant Manners Smith collected his men, and a short halt was called until the remaining Gurkhas and the Dogras under Lieutenant Taylor had come up. Then, dividing into parties, the sepoys attacked and carried the numerous sangas which studded the hillside, firing their roofs as they emptied each one. Some of our men swarmed high up the mountain-side, captured the sher bachas posted there, and rolled them down the precipices.

A determined resistance was offered by some of the enemy's marksmen, who fought to the death and asked no quarter ; but seeing how desperate was their situation, between the storming-party on one side and our rifles on

the ridge, the Kanjutis became flurried, their fire was unsteady, and the casualties on our side amounted only to four men wounded. Then the tribesmen lost heart and began to bolt precipitately from their defences ; at least a hundred of them were shot down as they attempted to escape, and many of those who succeeded in getting away from the ridge were picked off by our riflemen in the fort.

And now the tomtoms that had been beating in the distance became silent, and suddenly we saw a strange sight beneath us, which made our men raise cheer upon cheer. The garrisons of the enemy's fortresses, realising that we had effectively turned this position, on whose impregnability they had relied, that we had outflanked them, and that their retreat would be speedily cut off did they remain where they were, were seized with panic, and we looked down upon long streams of men hurrying up the valley on both sides of the river, the defenders of Maiun, Thol, and the Ziarat, hundreds upon hundreds of Kanjutis, racing up to Hunza and Nagar for their lives, and abandoning to us all the country within sight. Many horsemen, too, were galloping up the valley, evidently notables ; and among them, as we afterwards learnt, were the leaders of the Kanjut forces, their general, the Wazir Dadu, and the infamous Uzr Khan of Nagar.

These terror-stricken people were not able to get away so fast as they would have liked ; for just beyond Maiun the mountain falls precipitously into the river, and for some distance the path is very narrow and difficult. Here the hurrying fugitives were checked by a tremendous block of humanity. We were surprised to see what large garrisons these forts had contained. Our guns shelled the flying tribesmen, but with little effect from this distance.

The attack had thus proved a complete success. As one of our officers remarked, one might see many a bigger fight than this was, but never a prettier one. The whole affair was very cleverly planned and conducted ; while the dash with which the Kashmir sepoy, under their two British officers, rushed the sangas, evidently demoralised the bulk of the Kanjutis who held them ; and to this must be attributed the extraordinary disparity between our casualties and those of the enemy.

The 5th Gurkhas had gallantly borne the brunt of the first day's fight. It had now been the turn of the men of the Kashmir Bodyguard Regiment to prove of what stuff



A DOGRA AND A GURKHA SEPOY OF THE KASHMIR
BODYGUARD REGIMENT.

they were made ; and they certainly acquitted themselves admirably in this assault, which was calculated to try the nerve of the staunchest soldiers that ever fought. It was grand to see the way they followed the two British lieutenants on this desperate venture. The Imperial

Service troops distinguished themselves in this the first campaign in which they have been employed, and have shown that, when properly led, they can be fully relied upon for the defence of our frontier.

In recognition of the gallantry he displayed while leading this attack, the Queen conferred the Victoria Cross on Manners Smith. Thus, though this was but one of our little wars, no less than three of our officers won that coveted decoration, while another was appointed to the Distinguished Service Order. But this was a war of forlorn hopes. In an expedition such as this, when a handful of men is sent into a remote and difficult region to drive a well-armed foe, greatly superior in numbers, out of almost impregnable positions, it is only by such feats of individual heroism that victory is attained with so little loss of life. A show of indecision on our part before Nilt, a lack of fearless boldness in the hour of attack, would have led to far heavier losses on both sides and possible disaster on ours.

CHAPTER XXIII

ADVANCE OF OUR FORCE—PRISONERS TAKEN TO CHALT—SUBMISSION OF NAGAR—FLIGHT OF THE THUM OF HUNZA—SUBMISSION OF HUNZA—OCCUPATION OF NAGAR—OCCUPATION OF HUNZA—A TREASURE HUNT

It was about midday when we ceased firing from the ridge, and, led by our commander, we relieved our feelings with three ringing cheers. And now we had more work before us; for Captain Colin Mackenzie did not neglect the maxim which teaches that a flying foe should be followed up. It was not his intention to give the Kanjutis the opportunity to organise another stand. They were now "on the run," and they were to be most energetically kept "on the run" by our troops, until their complete submission had been effected.

The guns and marksmen were now withdrawn from the ridge, and fell back on the camp. We had time to breakfast before the force was formed up and a general advance ordered.

While the main force was advancing to Pisan, I was ordered to escort a body of prisoners as far as Chalt with my detachment of the 20th Punjab Infantry, and then return and overtake the main body without delay. This meant for me, as it turned out, a journey of forty-five miles—a forced march with a vengeance over such a rough country as this.

There was, as I knew, a chance of the enemy making a last, determined stand at the capital of Hunza, a very strong position ; so I was anxious to be back with the force as quickly as possible, fearing lest I should miss the storming of the thum's great castle, a wonderful place from all accounts, full of the spoils of a hundred pillaged caravans.

As soon as I had delivered my prisoners at Chalt, I hurried back to Pisan. I came across crowds of men, women, and children driving the cattle back from the mountains, to which they had been taken for safety, to the villages in the valley—a proof that peace had been restored in Nagar, if not in Hunza, and that the people had great confidence in us. They came up to me with demonstrations of friendship, and explained as well as they could that the ruler of Nagar had surrendered to our Political Officer, and that there was to be no more fighting on their side of the river. The poor people seemed delighted at the treatment they had received at the hands of their victors, and the security from all molestation which had been promised them. They brought me apples, which, with iced water, was my sole nourishment until the following day ; and not a bad diet either is this to work on.

The Nagaris struck me as a particularly pleasant people, and there was an honest look in their rosy faces. Many of the women were distinctly pretty. It seemed strange to be thus marching alone through the midst of a tribe that had been fighting hard with us but a few hours before, and, after doing our best to kill each other one day, to be thus on the most amicable terms the next. There are no other Eastern countries that I know of, and I should say there are few in Europe, where one could venture on such an experiment as this ; but I was, indeed, perfectly safe with our recent enemies, and it must be allowed that these tribesmen never exhibited the slightest treachery in their

dealings with us. They fought well; they faithfully observed truces; and, as soon as they had come to the conclusion that they had had fighting enough, they most philosophically accepted the position, and to all appearance bore us no ill-will.

It was not considered necessary to leave any troops in occupation of Nagar; there was very little chance of our having further trouble on that side of the river. The Thum was therefore informed that all the weapons in his country must be collected and delivered to us within a certain time, and at 10 A.M. our force evacuated the town and marched five miles back down the valley to Samaya, a village on the Nagar bank of the Kanjut River, and exactly opposite to the capital of the Hunza State.

Samaya is situated on a cliff some 600 feet above the river, and the view from here of the Kanjut fortress on the other side is exceedingly fine. Terrace above terrace of orchards and fields, broken here and there by abrupt cliffs, slope steeply up from the river-bed to the Hunza capital, which stands high on the mountain-side—a wall-surrounded city, covering a dome-shaped hill, and so forming a pyramid of buildings rising in steps to the imposing castle of the Hunza monarchs, which crowns the summit. Behind the town yawns the dark mouth of a narrow gorge hemmed in by precipices of immense height—an awful chasm in the mountains, at the head of which are glaciers of glittering green ice and stupendous snowy peaks.

This massive fortress, which has been for hundreds of years the secure stronghold of the robber kings, inviolate until that day, stands thus boldly out, set in the midst of a sublime landscape. It would be difficult in the world to find a situation more magnificent; but on looking from Samaya one does not even notice at first the distant Hunza capital—dwarfed as it is by the gigantic scale of the surrounding scenery, it appears merely as some insignificant mole-hill.

The Hunzas are a thorough people, and were now as energetically zealous in rendering us assistance as they had been in fighting us a day or two before. A party of tribesmen in the course of a few hours threw a capital temporary bridge across the Kanjut River to facilitate the

passage of our troops ; and as soon as it was ready Captain Twigg, Lieutenant Boisragon, and 100 men of the 5th Gurkhas were sent from Samaya to occupy Hunza Castle.

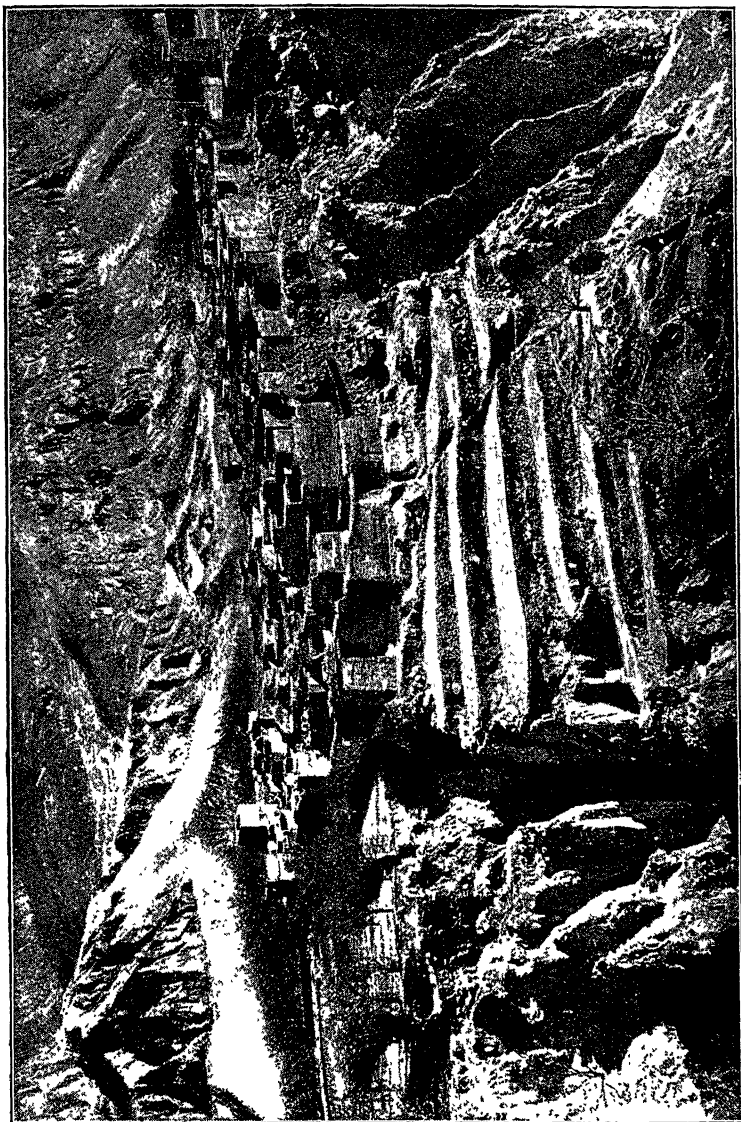
I obtained permission to go with them, and, taking Hunza guides to show us the road, we set out. All proper precautions to ensure us against surprise were observed. The tribesmen, notorious as they are for treacherous tricks, might have been leading us into a trap by a pretended submission. The ground below Hunza was admirably adapted for an ambuscade, and to have weakened our little force by cutting off 100 of our Gurkha detachment would have been a fine *coup* for the Kanjutis.

The two guns were brought into position on the cliff at Samaya to cover our advance ; the troops were kept ready to come to our support if we were attacked, and our ascent of the opposite hills was watched with some anxiety from the camp, until it was seen that we had safely attained the fortress and commanded the position.

We descended the cliff to the river, crossed the new-made bridge, and stood on Hunza territory. We slowly mounted from terrace to terrace, the path being narrow, rugged, and steep, generally with high stone walls on either side—an awkward trap to be caught in should the enemy think fit to attack us. We saw no women or children—a somewhat suspicious circumstance ; but the men came out in crowds to meet us, and we must have been surrounded by a dozen times our number. These citizens of Hunza were well clothed in warm chogas ; their black ringlets were tied in knots on either side, and some were of quite fair complexion, with rosy cheeks. They were certainly fine, sturdy-looking men, with frank, fearless mien. The features of many of them were finely chiselled. The strength of their chins and the determined but rather cruel expression of their mouths was noticeable.

They had a rather more truculent air than the Nagaris. They are, indeed, supposed to be the more warlike of the two peoples, and it is they who carried on the greater part of the caravan-raiding and slave-hunting in the valleys of the Hindoo Koosh.

The notables tried hard to dissuade us from entering the castle, explaining that it was very dirty, full of the fugitive



SAMAYA.

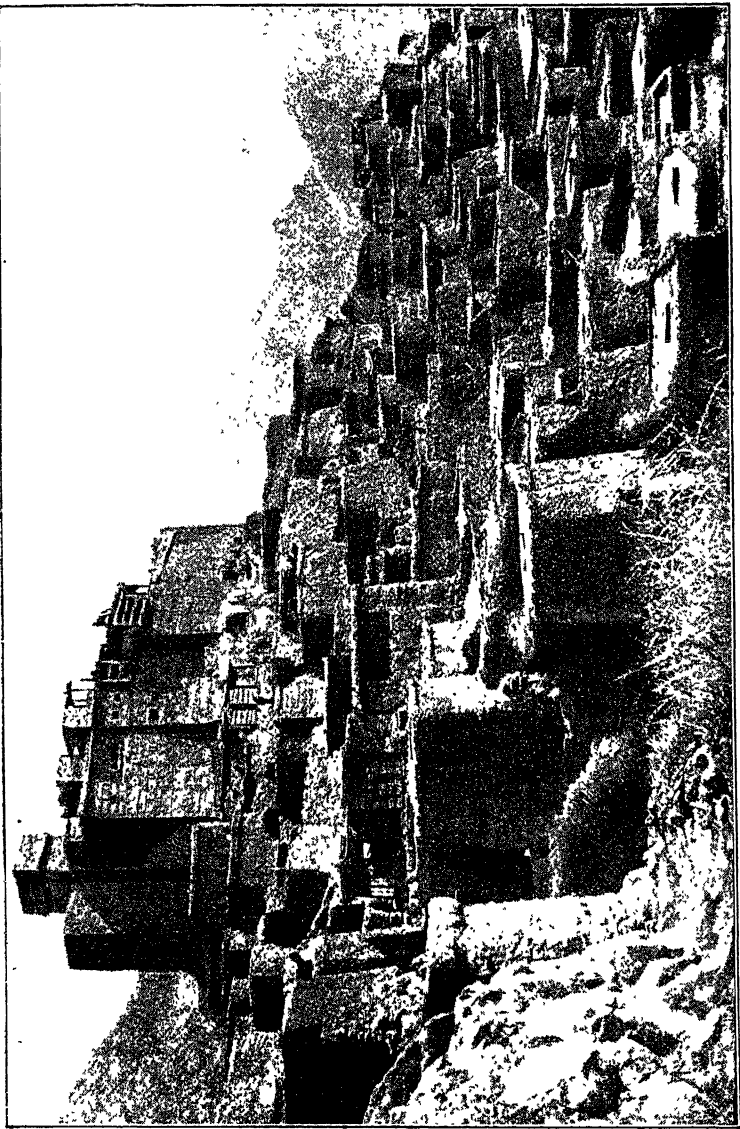
thum's lumber, and that they had swept out and garnished a much nicer house for us in the town below, the mansion of some wazir or other big man who had accompanied the monarch in his flight.

These arguments naturally only served to make us the more keen to occupy the castle, and thither we insisted on being taken. We passed through the alleys of the town, and entered the gate of the thum's stronghold. We found it to be a curious rambling old place, some five storeys high, well-built of sun-dried mud, stones, and timber. At the top were overhanging galleries of tastefully carved wood. Some of the rooms were capacious and comfortable, but most of them were merely dark little cells. A ladder placed in the middle of the floor of a room, and passing through a square hole in the ceiling, afforded access from one storey to the next.

We were up betimes on December 23, and proceeded to rummage all the nooks and corners of the deserted palace. We had heard that the treasures of many a pillaged caravan and the results of many a raid were stored here, so the search was an exciting one.

The tribesmen had been informed that, provided they gave up their arms, their property would be respected by us, and that they would be paid back in kind in the spring for the cattle, grain, and other supplies which were requisitioned by our forces subsequently to their submission; but the possessions of the fugitive thum were declared to be forfeited, so we set to work to collect together all the valuables that were to be found in the place, individual looting being of course forbidden.

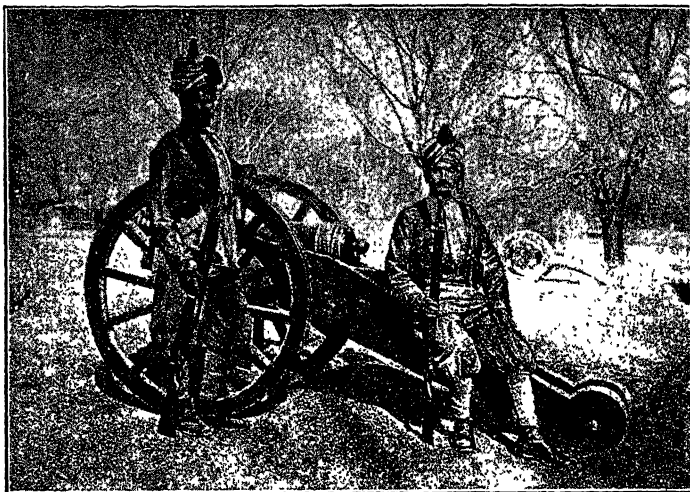
As a matter of fact, few articles of any worth were discovered; these were afterwards sold by auction at Gilgit, and the proceeds were divided among the sepoys who had taken part in the campaign. We were informed that the thum had made all his preparations for flight long before his defeat at Nilt, and having impressed some hundreds of men as coolies, had carried off the bulk of his wealth with him across the Hindoo Koosh. It is also more than probable that his subjects had not neglected the splendid opportunity of appropriating the remainder of their monarch's personal property during the interval between his departure and our occupation of the castle.



HUNZA CASTLE AND TOWN.

Still, they had not taken all, and we raked together a curious and miscellaneous collection of odds and ends scattered about and secreted away in the various chambers and cellars.

We scarcely anticipated that the most valuable loot to be found in the robber king's stronghold would take a literary form, but so it was. Though I believe the monarch cannot himself read, his library was extensive and interest-



SEPOYS OF 20TH PUNJAB INFANTRY AND HUNZA GUN.

ing. There were in it many beautifully bound and illuminated Korans, and curious Hindoo books and manuscripts, some evidently of great age.

Our exploration was very complete, and I think but little escaped us. We were just about to abandon the search when a discovery was made that raised our highest anticipations: it seemed as if we had at last hit upon the secret treasure-room of the thum, and were about to feast our eyes on a very Ali Baba's cave of stolen riches. But having had some disappointing previous experiences

of hunting for pirate treasure, I dared not feel over-sanguine.

Somebody's keen eye perceived that a space in one of the towers remained unaccounted for, showing that there must exist some secret chamber which had no windows, and the door of which had been walled up. This was very exciting. After probing about and knocking the mud plaster off the walls in several places, we at last discovered the artfully concealed door, which our Gurkhas soon battered in, and then we found ourselves peering into the pitchy blackness of the mysterious vault. A candle was lit and we entered. The first glance did not dispel our hopes, but on the contrary rather raised them. Banners and chain-armour hung from the roof-beams, and all round the walls were ranged in order large, strong, wooden chests, and sacks of canvas or leather. The first chest was carefully opened, and was found to be full to the brim—with gunpowder. One by one we examined all the others, with a like result. The sacks for their part contained garnet bullets.

So we had discovered no treasure-room, and this was evidently only the principal powder-magazine of the country. We came out laughing at our frustrated hopes, and had the door barricaded again, in case of accidents; for there was enough powder in this magazine to have brought the whole castle tumbling down upon the town below on the application of a spark.

NOTES

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- 2, *deodar* : the Indian cedar.
- tonga* : the tonga is the post-chaise of India. It has a tail-board that lets down so that there are seats for three passengers : one beside the driver in front and two behind. The syce, who blows the horn, stands on the step.
- 3, *coolie* : the "navvy" of India.
- Paihan* : pronounced pa-tān (accent on second syllable). They are frontiersmen who speak the pushto dialect, which is distinct from the Indian languages.
- The Baltis are people of Baltistan ; the Kashmiris are people of Kashmir.
- 4, *a rough voyage* : Mr Knight was there in the month of April, when the snows on the mountains had begun to melt after an exceptionally heavy fall. Alexander embarked his army in the last days of October, when the summer melting of snow had finished. Indian rivers are at their lowest in the winter months.
- 6, *Sikhs* : a Hindu religious sect, founded in the Punjab, that developed military power and became a kingdom.
- 7, *Chins* : a people of Mongol stock.
- Afridis, Akhils, and Mishtis* : various frontier tribes.
- 9, *quant* : push with a quant or long pole.
- 10, *waters broke through the mountain barrier* : such occasional mighty happenings might account for Himalayan rivers having, in the past, changed their courses. The Hydaspes is reputed to have changed its course, possibly since Alexander's invasion.
- 11, *Moguls* : a corruption of the word "Mongol." The Mogul Empire of India was ruled over by kings of Turki ancestry. The Turks were of Mongol race. Tatars, from the Chinese steppes, also are of Mongol race ; so are Tibetans.
- the Happy Valley* : a name given to Kashmir.
- 13, *cuckoo* : the Indian bird corresponding to the English cuckoo is the coo-el, or ko-el. In the Indian hills and in Kashmir the cuckoo has the real cuckoo note. The cuckoo and ko-el both lay eggs in other birds' nests.
- Srinagar* : originally Surya Nagar, Sun City.
- Takht-i-Suleiman* : throne of Solomon.

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- 14, *ghats* : steps down to the river.
dome of a temple : the dome is the outstanding feature of Saracenic (i.e. Mahomedan) architecture. Possibly it was a Jain temple (see picture on p. 19 with Jain temple in background).
- Maharajah* : Kashmir is ruled over by a Hindu dynasty ; most of the people are Mussulmans.
- 16, *Versailles* : the summer palace of the kings of France.
nautches : dances by professional dancers.
- 17, *gourmet* : one who delights in eating.
- 18, *yakdan* : mule-trunk, also evidently yak-trunk. The yak is the beast of burden of the Himalayan countries.
- 20, *ghee* : butter melted down to preserve it.
dastur : pronounced dustoor.
- 21, *Wazir Bagh* : or vizir, prime minister's garden.
- 25, *new cart road* : this book was written in 1891. The abuses in the administrative system described also belong to that period rather than the present.
Brahmins : the priestly caste of the Hindu religion, who are exempted by tradition from toil.
- 26, *pollarded* : their heads cut off, causing numerous small branches to sprout out.
- 27, *pundit* : an educated Hindu.
chaukidars : watchmen ; bodyguard on this occasion.
- 29, *Resident* : the Indian government is represented in dependent States by a Political Officer or Resident.
Akbar, Jehangir, and Aurungzebe : three of the Moghul emperors of India, who used Kashmir as a summer resort. The first of the Moghul emperors, Babar, was, in his early days, king of Ferghana in Turkistan, and was therefore accustomed to a cool climate.
Nur Mahal : "Light of the Palace," the title of the queen of the Emperor Jehangir.
- 32, *lumbadar* : head man of the village.
- 33, *Babel* : according to the Bible the diversity of language occurred at the building of the tower of Babel.
treeless mountain slopes : those sloping towards the south received too much heat and were too dry for trees to grow ; the summer rainfall sufficed for trees on the shady sides of the valleys.
- 35, *bakshish* : the word used in the East for a "tip" or gratuity.
- 36, *dak wallah* : mail carrier.
- 37, *Dogra*s : the Rajput conquerors of Kashmir. At one time the Rajputs prevailed over Central and North-Western India. Their conquests extended into the Himalayan countries of Kashmir and Nepal.

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- 37, *rainfall* : Kashmir is just within the influence of the S.W. monsoon wind, which brings intermittent rain in July, August, and September.
- thanadar* : an official.
- 43, *sarcophagi* : plural of sarcophagus, a stone coffin
- lamas* : the priests and monks of the Buddhist religion in Central Asia.
- 44, *serai* : rest-house for travellers.
- 45, *queues* : under the Tatar régime the Chinese wore their hair plaited in queues as a sign of servitude. Queues were discarded after the Chinese revolution.
- rosary* : a string of beads, each bead representing a prayer. As the devotee prays, he fingers the beads ("tells" the beads) until the prayers have all been said. A prayer-wheel has prayers written on it, and the turning of the wheel is tantamount to the saying of the prayer.
- 46, *incarnation* : it is a Buddhist belief that when a man dies his spirit may be born again in another body. This is called reincarnation.
- 50, *idol* : it is a human weakness to idolise. The Buddhists, as a rule, restrict their idolisation to images of the Buddha himself, or of one of the disciples who were associated with him during his life on earth.
- 51, *Rajahs of Ladak* : kings of Ladak. In this respect Ladak differed from Tibet, where the head of the Buddhist Church is also the ruler of the country.
- 52, *Moravian missionaries* : missionaries of the Moravian brotherhood—a Christian sect, founded in Germany in the fifteenth century by John Huss.
- 54, *cataract of the eye* : a membrane, or thin skin, grows over the eye and causes people to be partially blind
- terra incognita* : unknown territory. Nomads are people who wander.
- 56, *Manipur* : this State is at the eastern extremity of the Himalayan ranges, more than a thousand miles away. The people of Manipur are of Mongolian origin, and the game on horseback they play is known as *mal*. The British borrowed the game from them and called it polo. The game seems to be indigenous to people of Mongolian origin.
- chung* : a spirituous drink.
- 60, *ummery* : the old English word for acting. Actors were once known as mummerys.
- 61, *friezes* : the flat stones at the head of the round columns.
- harlequinade* : a performance by harlequins. Harlequins are dressed in quaint, tight-fitting costumes, and amuse onlookers by their funny actions.
- shawm* : a reed instrument.

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- 62, *mitre and cope* : head-dress and cloak worn on ceremonial occasions.
- Gregorian chant* : chants set to music in the time of Pope Gregory XIII. of Rome.
- partaking of sacrament* : a religious ceremony practised in Europe by Roman Catholics and others.
- 64, *Tibetan music* : the orchestra consisted of wind instruments which played the air, punctuated by the clash of cymbals and the drumming of tambourines.
- 73, *col* : narrow, deep valley across the ridge.
coulon : a steep gully on the side of a peak.
- 79, *dali* : Hindustani word meaning branch.
- 80, *tiffin kulta* : vessel in which tiffin (lunch) is carried.
- 88, *shikaring* : hunting.
- 94, *tomtoms* : small, long drums beaten by means of the fingers.
- 95, *zanana* : female.
- 98, *Kashmir Durbar* : the Maharaja of Kashmir and his counsellors.
- 100, *Alexander not a traveller* : the thum evidently was not acquainted with the fact that Alexander the Great, who conquered Hindustan, was a European monarch.
- 101, *Kafirs* : non-believers.
- 103, *flag-waggers* : signalmen who used flags to send messages. Each letter of the alphabet was represented by holding flags in certain positions.
- 106, *seaman* : the author was a seaman as well as a war correspondent.
- 107, *sher bacha* : tiger cub.
- 108, *Wakil* : or vakil, a pleader, usually a pleader in the law-courts; here an emissary of peace.
- 109, *maidan* : plain.
- 110, *Sekander* . this is the Indian equivalent of Alexander. The name became common among Royal houses after Alexander's invasion in the fourth century B.C.
- Punials* : one of the many border tribes who take the part of the British in their efforts to suppress disorder on the north-western frontier of India.
- 111, *Imperial Service troops* : troops raised and maintained by Indian-ruling princes to co-operate with the British in the defence of India.
- 112, *Channel-steamer* : one that crosses the English Channel, which is a notoriously rough crossing.
- 113, *zereba* : embankment.
- 114, *abattis* : defensive wall of branches of trees.

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- 117, *matchlock* : the first gun had simply a touch-hole, to which a lighted match (in those days a kind of taper) was applied so as to ignite the charge of powder and fire the gun. The matchlock had a kind of trigger which held the lighted match, and did not ignite the powder until it was pressed. This improvement gave time, while the match was burning, for aim to be taken. It was an improvement on the first gun, but not so good as the flint-lock, which succeeded the matchlock. (As the flint-lock ignited the powder by means of a momentary spark, it did not dazzle the eye when taking aim as did the matchlock.)
- 118, *Kukri* : the famous short Gurkha sword.
- 120, *Umbeyla* : this refers to a famous fight with the Bunerwals on the north-western frontier of India. The simplicity of character of the Bunerwals (people of Buner) is a byword throughout India. They are honest and friendly as well as simple.
- 121, *sanga* : stone wall, breast high.
- 122, *sepoy* : really sipahi, the Hindustani word for soldier.
- 127, *roster* : list of officers.
- 129, *visiting rounds* : a military term. The rounds are made by the officer in charge to see that the sentinels are keeping a good watch.
- 136, *V.C.* : Victoria Cross : the highest decoration granted for bravery on the field of battle.
- 137, *Martim-Henry* : the particular type of rifle used in the British army in 1891.
- 138, *mess-tent* : the tent in which the officers had mess (*i.e.* ate their meals).
- tamasha* : a Hindustani word meaning "show," or jollification.